

NOTES ON PROVERBS

Peder Henrik Kristian Zahrtmann, known as Kristian Zahrtmann, (31 March 1843 – 22 June 1917) was a Danish painter. He was a part of the Danish artistic generation in the late 19th century, along with Peder Severin Krøyer and Theodor Esbern Philipsen, who broke away from both the strictures of traditional Academicism and the heritage of the Golden Age of Danish Painting, in favour of naturalism and realism.

He was known especially for his history paintings, and especially those depicting strong, tragic, legendary women in Danish history. He also produced works of many other genres including landscapes, street scenes, folk scenes and portraits.

He had a far-reaching effect on the development of Danish art through his effective support of individual style among his students during the many years he taught. In addition, his bold use of colour dazzled contemporaries and has been seen as an anticipation of Expressionism by art historians.

משלי שלמה בן-דוד מלך ישראל

The Wisdom of Solomon The Son of David King of Israel

Contents

Proverbs Introduction.....	8
Solomon the Wise	9
Solomon as a Parent.....	10
Pro 1:25 But ye have set at nought all my counsel	12
Pro 1:20 Wisdom crieth without	13
Pro 1:23 Turn you at my reproof.....	14
Pro 2:1 My son, if thou wilt receive my words	15
Pro 2:10 When wisdom entereth into thine heart.....	16
Pro 3:1 My son, forget not my law.....	17
Pro 4:1 Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father	18
Pro 4:7 Wisdom is the principal thing	19
Pro 5:1 My son, attend unto my wisdom	21
Pro 6:1 My son, if thou be surety for thy friend	22
Pro 6:6 Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise.....	25
Pro 6:12 A naughty person, a wicked man, walketh with a froward mouth.	26
Pro 6:16 These six things doth the LORD hate.....	27
Pro 6:20 My son, keep thy father's commandment.....	30
Pro 6:23 For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light	35
Pro 7:9 In the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night	36
Pro 8:22 The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way.....	37
Pro 9:1 Wisdom hath builded her house	39
Pro 10:1 A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother	40
Pro 10:2 Treasures of wickedness profit nothing	41
Pro 10:4 He becometh poor that dealeth <i>with</i> a slack hand	43
Pro 10:6 Blessings are upon the head of the just.....	44
Pro 10:8 The wise in heart will receive commandments.....	46
Pro 10:10 He that winketh with the eye causeth sorrow.....	47
Pro 10:15 The rich man's wealth <i>is</i> his strong city	49
Pro 10:24 The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him	50
Pro 10:26 As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes	51
Pro 10:27 If you respect the LORD, you will live longer	52
Pro 10:28 The hope of the <i>righteous shall be</i> gladness.....	54
Pro 10:31 Honest people speak sensibly	55

Pro 11:1 A false balance <i>is</i> abomination to the LORD	57
Pro 11:2 When pride cometh, then cometh shame	58
Pro 11:5 The righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way	58
Pro 11:10 When it goeth well with the righteous, the city rejoiceth	59
Pro 11:12 He that is void of wisdom despiseth his neighbour.....	65
Pro 11:15 Its a dangerous thing to guarantee payment for someone's debts	66
Pro 11:16 A gracious woman retaineth honour; and the violent retain riches	67
Pro 11:17 Kindness is rewarded - but if you are cruel, you hurt yourself.	68
Pro 11:22 A beautiful woman who acts foolishly is like a gold ring on the snout of a pig.	70
Pro 11:24 There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth	71
Pro 11:29 He that troubleth his own house shall inherit the wind	72
Pro 12:1 Whoso loveth instruction loveth knowledge	73
Pro 12:4 A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband	74
Pro 12:5 The thoughts of the righteous are right	75
Pro 12:14 We are rewarded or punished for what we say and do.	78
Pro 12:25 Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop	80
Pro 12:27 The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting	81
Pro 12:28 Follow the road to life, and you won't be bothered by death.	82
Pro 13:1 Children with good sense accept correction from their parents	83
Pro 13:1 A wise son heareth his father's instruction.....	84
Pro 13:2 You will be well rewarded for saying something kind	86
Pro 13:4 The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing	87
Pro 13:5 A good person hates deceit	89
Pro 13:7 There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing	91
Pro 13:10 Too much pride causes trouble.	92
Pro 13:11 Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished.....	94
Pro 13:12 Hope deferred maketh the heart sick.....	95
Pro 13:13 Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed.....	96
Pro 13:15 Good understanding giveth favour	97
Pro 13:17 Whoever delivers your message can make things better or worse for you.	98
Pro 13:18 All who refuse correction will be poor and disgraced	101
Pro 13:20 He that walketh with wise men shall be wise	102
Pro 13:22 A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children	103
Pro 13:23 Much food is in the tillage of the poor	105

Pro 14:1 A woman's family is held together by her wisdom	108
Pro 14:2 By living right, you show that you respect the LORD	109
Pro 14:4 Without the help of an ox there can be no crop.....	110
Pro 14:5 An honest witness tells the truth	111
Pro 14:10 No one else can really know how sad or happy you are.	113
Pro 14:12 There is a way which seemeth right unto a man	114
Pro 14:14 You harvest what you plant, whether good or bad.....	116
Pro 14:15 Don't be stupid and believe all you hear	117
Pro 14:19 The wicked will come crawling to those who obey God.....	118
Pro 14:21 Its wrong to hate others	119
Pro 14:22 Its a mistake to make evil plans	120
Pro 14:26 In the fear of the LORD is strong confidence	121
Pro 14:28 Rulers of powerful nations are held in honour	123
Pro 14:31 If you mistreat the poor, you insult your Creator	124
Pro 15:1 A soft answer turneth away wrath.....	125
Pro 15:5 A fool despiseth his father's instruction	128
Pro 15:7 Words of wisdom make good sense.....	129
Pro 15:11 Hell and destruction are before the LORD.....	131
Pro 15:13 Happiness makes you smile; sorrow can crush you.	132
Pro 15:14 Anyone with good sense is eager to learn more.....	133
Pro 15:15 The poor have a hard life	135
Pro 15:17 A simple meal with love is better than a feast where there is hatred.	137
Pro 15:21 Folly is joy to him that is destitute of wisdom	138
Pro 15:22 Without counsel purposes are disappointed	141
Pro 15:27 Being greedy causes trouble for your family	144
Pro 15:29 The LORD is far from the wicked	148
Pro 16:1 We humans make plans, but the LORD has the final word.	149
Pro 16:2 All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes	151
Pro 16:4 The LORD hath made all things for himself	154
Pro 16:5 Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD	155
Pro 16:7 When a man's ways please the LORD.....	156
Pro 16:8 Its better to be honest and poor than to be dishonest and rich.....	157
Pro 16:11 The LORD doesn't like it when we cheat in business.....	158
Pro 16:33 The lot is cast into the lap	160

Pro 16:9 A man's heart deviseth his way	162
Pro 17:1 A dry crust of bread eaten in peace	163
Pro 17:3 Silver and gold are tested by flames of fire	164
Pro 17:5 By insulting the poor, you insult your Creator.	167
Pro 17:6 Children's children are the crown of old men.....	168
Pro 17:9 You will keep your friends if you forgive them	170
Pro 17:13 Whoso rewardeth evil for good	171
Pro 17:15 The LORD doesn't like those who defend the guilty or condemn the innocent.	172
Pro 17:16 Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom	174
Pro 17:17 A friend is always a friend.....	176
Pro 17:18 Its stupid to guarantee someone else's loan.	177
Pro 17:19 The wicked and the proud love trouble.....	178
Pro 17:24 Wisdom is before him that hath understanding	179
Pro 17:27 He that hath knowledge spareth his words	183
Pro 18:1 Its selfish and stupid to think only of yourself and to sneer at people who have sense.....	185
Pro 18:8 The words of a talebearer are as wounds	186
Pro 18:9 He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster.	188
Pro 18:10 The name of the LORD is a strong tower	189
Pro 18:11 The rich man's wealth is his strong city	191
Pro 18:14 The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity	192
Pro 18:16 A man's gift maketh room for him	193
Pro 18:18 The lot causeth contentions to cease	195
Pro 18:19 Making up with a friend you have offended is harder than breaking through a city wall	197
Pro 18:22 Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing	198
Pro 18:24 A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly	201
Pro 19:10 It isn't right for a fool to live in luxury or for a slave to rule in place of a king.	203
Pro 19:11 The discretion of a man deferreth his anger.....	204
Pro 19:13 A foolish son brings disgrace to his father	205
Pro 19:14 You may inherit all you own from your parents.....	207
Pro 19:17 He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD	210
Pro 19:18 Correct your children before its too late	211
Pro 20:5 Someone's thoughts may be as deep as the ocean	213
Pro 20:7 Good people live right, and God blesses the children who follow their example.	214
Pro 20:8 When rulers decide cases, they weigh the evidence	216

Pro 20:12 The hearing ear, and the seeing eye	217
Pro 20:14 It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer	219
Pro 20:16 Take his garment that is surety for a stranger	222
Pro 20:18 Be sure you have sound advice before making plans or starting a war.	224
Pro 20:21 An inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning.....	226
Pro 20:24 How can we know what will happen to us when the LORD alone decides?	227
Pro 20:27 The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD.....	229
Pro 20:28 Mercy and truth preserve the king.....	231
Pro 21:1 The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD.....	233
Pro 21:2 Every way of a man is right in his own eyes.....	234
Pro 21:3 To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.	235
Pro 21:5 If you plan and work hard, you will have plenty	239
Pro 21:9 Its better to stay outside on the roof of your house than to live inside with a nagging wife	241
Pro 21:10 Evil people want to do wrong, even to their friends.....	242
Pro 21:11 An ignorant fool learns by seeing others punished.....	243
Pro 21:13 Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor	245
Pro 21:16 The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead.....	246
Pro 21:17 He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man	252
Pro 21:18 The wicked shall be a ransom for the righteous	253
Pro 21:22 A wise man scaleth the city of the mighty	255
Pro 21:25 The desire of the slothful killeth him.....	258
Pro 21:27 The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination.....	260
Pro 21:30 No matter how much you know or what plans you make.....	262
Pro 22:3 A prudent man foreseeth the evil	263
Pro 22:7 The rich ruleth over the poor	265
Pro 22:9 He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed.....	266
Pro 22:12 The eyes of the LORD preserve knowledge	268
Pro 22:14 The mouth of strange women is a deep pit	269
Pro 22:15 Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child.....	270
Pro 22:24 Make no friendship with an angry man	272
Pro 22:26 Do not be found among those who make deals with a handshake	273

Proverbs Introduction

Dedicated to those souls who patiently sat through these ministries and shared their thoughts, together with those who will also derive benefit from them.

These short ministries were given between April 2005 and December 2012. During this period, on Sundays, we elected to study a book from the New Testament and a book from the Older Testament. We chose Hebrews and Proverbs.

Please note that many of the statistics and data quoted are from the time of writing and therefore will in many instances differ from those of today, statistics were also updated up until 2014.

As we got into the Proverbs we began to look at them as they related to that time in our lives. Many of the illustrations as a result draw upon contemporary news and social events. **They are a social commentary on that age.**

Proverbs is a timeless commentary on the human condition and as relevant today as when Solomon first applied his wisdom to these pithy sayings. The sayings are like a box of chocolates with a variety of tastes, sweetly wrapped and each satisfying without bloating.

Why are they relevant? It is because there is nothing new under the sun. We have the same sins, perhaps some in more modern attire but none the less recognisable as the same sins of old.

We thank You Lord for Your wisdom and care for our souls. Amen.

My grateful thanks to Shelley, my amanuensis and my daughter, for proofing and updating this version, without whose help it would have languished in its original form.

Mike Winnett.

June 26th 2020

Solomon the Wise

Pro 1:1 The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel; Pro 1:2 To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; Pro 1:3 To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity; Pro 1:4 To give subtlety to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion.

Proverbs tells us straight away about its author “Solomon the wise”. In this book we shall see and learn lots of wise sayings and practical observations on life. Some people have been described as so heavenly minded tend to be of no earthly use! Proverbs makes us of earthly use. But where did it all start?

I think that Solomon was to some extent in awe of his father David who was a hard act to follow. After David’s death the difficult task was all too apparent to him. Solomon needed help and help came in one of his dreams. *1Ki 3:5 In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee. 1Ki 3:6 And Solomon said, Thou hast shewed unto thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day. 1Ki 3:7 And now, O LORD my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in. 1Ki 3:8 And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. 1Ki 3:9 Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?*

To Solomon was given a unique degree of wisdom. *1Ki 4:32 And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five. 1Ki 4:33 And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes. 1Ki 4:34 And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom.* He entertained people with his wisdom and people came from around the world just to hear what he had to say. I don’t know of any man alive that I would take a journey to go and listen to but if Solomon were here it would be worth a trip

In what did Solomon’s wisdom consist? Wisdom is in essence the ability to discern between good and evil and to be able to summarise or express it in a judgement. We might say that wisdom is the product of a discerning mind that makes some observations of life that hold true for all men in all times. For example the ant, that tiny insect is a model character for the lazy man. *Pro 6:6 Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise:* The Ant is a spiritual lesson in nature.

Perhaps the greatest example given to us of Solomon’s wisdom is the case of the two prostitutes claiming the motherhood of a child. Solomon had no idea whose child it really was but he did know something about motherhood. He used this knowledge as the tool to discern the truth and this is wisdom in action. Solomon knew that the natural mother would have a deeper love for the child

than the woman who was not the natural mother. How then to test this love? Kill the child? It was this test that revealed the truth and settled the case.

1Ki 3:16 Then came there two women, that were harlots, unto the king, and stood before him. 1Ki 3:17 And the one woman said, O my lord, I and this woman dwell in one house; and I was delivered of a child with her in the house. 1Ki 3:18 And it came to pass the third day after that I was delivered, that this woman was delivered also: and we were together; there was no stranger with us in the house, save we two in the house. 1Ki 3:19 And this woman's child died in the night; because she overlaid it. 1Ki 3:20 And she arose at midnight, and took my son from beside me, while thine handmaid slept, and laid it in her bosom, and laid her dead child in my bosom. 1Ki 3:21 And when I rose in the morning to give my child suck, behold, it was dead: but when I had considered it in the morning, behold, it was not my son, which I did bear. 1Ki 3:22 And the other woman said, Nay; but the living is my son, and the dead is thy son. And this said, No; but the dead is thy son, and the living is my son. Thus they spake before the king. 1Ki 3:23 Then said the king, The one saith, This is my son that liveth, and thy son is the dead: and the other saith, Nay; but thy son is the dead, and my son is the living. 1Ki 3:24 And the king said, Bring me a sword. And they brought a sword before the king. 1Ki 3:25 And the king said, Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one, and half to the other. 1Ki 3:26 Then spake the woman whose the living child was unto the king, for her bowels yearned upon her son, and she said, O my lord, give her the living child, and in no wise slay it. But the other said, Let it be neither mine nor thine, but divide it. 1Ki 3:27 Then the king answered and said, Give her the living child, and in no wise slay it: she is the mother thereof. 1Ki 3:28 And all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had judged; and they feared the king: for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him, to do judgment.

Wisdom has a lot to do with knowing the human condition. It is perhaps the psychology of sin.

Solomon as a Parent

Pro 1:8 My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother.

Solomon whatever his failings were was very concerned about his sons. Good parents bring up their children in such a way that they will be able to cope and survive on their own. Solomon knows as all parents know “that foolishness is bound in the heart of a child”. *Pro 22:15 Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.* We are not talking about being silly, lazy or stupid though these may apply. It goes much, much deeper. We are all born with a congenital defect of the soul or rather a heart condition that if it remains untreated will be eternally fatal. *Jer 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? It cannot be mended or cured; it must be totally replaced. Eze 36:26 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.*

Solomon as a parent is concerned about the underlying causes of foolishness in children. It is wickedness begotten of sin. Sin is at work in the heart of our children. As yet it cannot be expressed as vigorously as in an adult but it is there none the less.

With age, sin ripens and grows. We become more subtle in the way we operate. Children find it difficult to hide things but given time, they become masters in the art of deceit.

It is therefore natural for children to resist their parents because sin will encourage rebellion. Parents likewise must recognise the problem that they are dealing with, namely sin. It is the duty of the parent to discipline the child for the sake of the child and society. *Deu 21:18 If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them: Deu 21:19 Then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place; Deu 21:20 And they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard. Deu 21:21 And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear.* But most of all, discipline and instruction should be redemptive.

What is the point of all of your good work, bringing up your children, educating them, feeding and clothing them, if at the last they do not join you in heaven?

Solomon's advice gives us a perspective from which to work, namely the fear of the Lord. *Pro 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.* Your instruction, discipline and direction should all spring from this platform and you should explain when disciplining that you are motivated by this, the fear of the Lord.

Whatever we learn in life, whatever knowledge we pick up along the way, it is worthless if it does not have "the Lord" as its foundation. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. If we would learn anything, let it be from and out of respect for our creator.

And children, listen to your parents. *Pro 1:8 My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: Pro 1:10 My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.*

This week (April 2005) 15 teenagers were arrested for an attack upon a shopkeeper who later died. I wonder how many of those young people were encouraged by friends to take part in the act and how many of them bitterly regretted it. There is a proverb that says "Act in haste, repent at leisure". Some people get involved in things without thinking about the consequences. They act quickly but afterwards in prison, when they have time, they see the foolishness of their actions.

How can we avoid doing this and what does Solomon advise us?

There is something, a quality that emerges, in all of God's faithful young people. They are not afraid to be different from the crowd. They do not have to dress the same, act the same and have the same interests just to be accepted or to make friends. Be your own person and parents, encourage individuality in your children.

When Daniel went into captivity with the Jews, you would have thought that he would have been happy to eat any food given to him. Not Daniel. *Dan 1:8 But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank:*

therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. Throughout his life, he was a man of principle who would not be persuaded to do wrong even if the world was against him and death was threatened. I wonder how his parents brought him up and prepared him for life. Other young men who were not afraid to be different were Joseph, David, Moses, Joshua, Samuel and Jesus.

Solomon paints a picture of young men, evil young men, who lead a good boy astray. He shows how to avoid the trap. We have found that we can actually save lives and reduce crashes on the roads using this technique. Hazard perception is a training system that takes you through a series of hazards on the road in a simulation environment. If you make a mistake it is not fatal. Solomon is using his life experience to create something similar. You don't have to learn by making mistakes in life. You can learn from other people's mistakes, especially where the consequences are life ruining.

Pro 1:25 But ye have set at nought all my counsel

Pro 1:25 But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: Pro 1:26 I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh;

Our text in Proverbs shows how God's wisdom is rejected and how there is as a consequence of this the result that God will desert you. Perhaps that is why so many people are seeking answers to life elsewhere because God will not talk to them. God refused to speak to Saul for his sin and so he resorted to the witch of Endor.

I think that there is a judgement at present in our day and it may be upon this generation until they are broken. Let us not also fail to observe the signs of the times that show that God is not with the nations of the earth.

Revival will come at a price. I do not count what the televangelists do as revival. Their work has no place for sin, for repentance or for separation. They mix with those who undermine the truth of Christ. The first step to revival is separation. *2Co 6:17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, Num 16:21 Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment.*

It is the distancing from all of those things which pollute and corrupt the faith so that God may dwell with us in holiness.

Then we must open our mind to the wisdom of God and then He will give us His Spirit. *Pro 1:23 Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.* What is your idea of spirituality or a spiritual person? God willing we shall explore this. What is very clear from proverbs is that God's spirit is inexorably bound together with His word and His wisdom.

Pro 1:20 Wisdom crieth without

Pro 1:20 Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets. Wisdom cries out against the fools of this world but the fools of this world don't listen. On our holidays this year we studied the book of Ecclesiastes, also written by King Solomon using the contemporary English Version, the CEV.

The book of Ecclesiastes is so different from Proverbs. In some ways it is quite depressing as it casts an almost cynical glance at life. The Hebrew word "hebel" or vanity is used 37 times and has been called the key to the book. *Ecc 1:2 Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity.* The word "hebel" means a breath or light wind, something that passes more or less quickly and completely and leaves no residue.

Proverbs unlike Ecclesiastes has a vitality, confidence and positive direction. Proverbs knows the answers to life and does not hesitate to instruct us. Proverbs does not lurch about in uncertainty or despair in this world.

Why or how could these two books come from the same author? I would give an opinion that they are written from two different perspectives. Ecclesiastes is a world view without the knowledge of God. I like the way the CEV translates "vanity of vanities". *Ecc 1:2 Nothing makes sense! Everything is nonsense. I have seen it all— nothing makes sense!*

In order to illustrate this, Solomon proceeds to speak of the monotony and senselessness of life. Solomon tried to understand life. *Ecc 2:1 I said to myself, "Have fun and enjoy yourself!" But this didn't make sense. Ecc 2:2 Laughing and having fun is crazy. What good does it do? Ecc 2:3 I wanted to find out what was best for us during the short time we have on this earth. So I decided to make myself happy with wine and find out what it means to be foolish, without really being foolish myself. Ecc 2:4 I did some great things. I built houses and planted vineyards. Ecc 2:5 I had flower gardens and orchards full of fruit trees. Ecc 2:6 And I had pools where I could get water for the trees. Ecc 2:7 I owned slaves, and their sons and daughters became my slaves. I had more sheep and goats than anyone who had ever lived in Jerusalem. Ecc 2:8 Foreign rulers brought me silver, gold, and precious treasures. Men and women sang for me, and I had many wives who gave me great pleasure. Ecc 2:9 I was the most famous person who had ever lived in Jerusalem, and I was very wise. Ecc 2:10 I got whatever I wanted and did whatever made me happy. But most of all, I enjoyed my work. Ecc 2:11 Then I thought about everything I had done, including the hard work, and it was simply chasing the wind. Nothing on earth is worth the trouble.* He despaired of the human condition and saw that all of life was fluff and feathers carried in the wind. *Ecc 4:1 I looked again and saw people being mistreated everywhere on earth. They were crying, but no one was there to offer comfort, and those who mistreated them were powerful. Ecc 4:2 I said to myself, "The dead are better off than the living. Ecc 4:3 But those who have never been born are better off than anyone else, because they have never seen the terrible things that happen on this earth." Ecc 4:15 I once saw everyone in the world follow a young leader who came to power after the king was gone. Ecc 4:16 His followers could not even be counted. But years from now, no one will praise him—this makes no more sense than chasing the wind.*

Solomon also despairs at the inequity of life.

- **Life is unfair.** *Ecc 6:1 There is something else terribly unfair, and it troubles everyone on earth. Ecc 6:2 God may give you everything you want—money, property, and wealth. Then God doesn't let you enjoy it, and someone you don't even know gets it all. That's senseless and terribly unfair!*
- **Life is short.** *Ecc 6:12 Life is short and meaningless, and it fades away like a shadow. Who knows what is best for us? Who knows what will happen after we are gone?*
- **Life is boring.** *Ecc 1:18 The more you know, the more you hurt; the more you understand, the more you suffer.*
- **Life is miserable.** *Ecc 4:8 For example, some people don't have friends or family. But they are never satisfied with what they own, and they never stop working to get more. They should ask themselves, "Why am I always working to have more? Who will get what I leave behind?" What a senseless and miserable life!*
- **Life is senseless.** *Ecc 7:15 I have seen everything during this senseless life of mine. I have seen good citizens die for doing the right thing, and I have seen criminals live to a ripe old age.*
- **Life is hard.** *Ecc 8:6 Life is hard, but there is a time and a place for everything.*

But what life is really about is respect of God. *Ecc 12:13 Everything you were taught can be put into a few words: Respect and obey God! This is what life is all about.*

Like Asaph, Solomon could not make sense of life by human reason. Asaph's turning point came when he adopted God's perspective, when he looked at life through God's eyes. *Psa 73:14 I am sick all day, and I am punished each morning. Psa 73:15 If I had said evil things, I would not have been loyal to your people. Psa 73:16 It was hard for me to understand all this! Psa 73:17 Then I went to your temple, and there I understood what will happen to my enemies. Psa 73:18 You will make them stumble, never to get up again.*

Paul says that worldly wisdom is foolishness with God. *1Co 3:19 This is because God considers the wisdom of this world to be foolish. It is just as the Scriptures say, "God catches the wise when they try to outsmart him."* God's wisdom provides us with spiritual eyes through which we can discern the ways of the world. *Pro 1:20 Wisdom shouts in the streets wherever crowds gather.*

Pro 1:23 Turn you at my reproof

Pro 1:23 Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.

I suggested that we would consider what it is and what it means to be spiritual. Some think that is

accomplished by climbing the ladder of church hierarchy or moving up the chains to get closer to God. Well that is a man made organisation. There is no hierarchy in Christ's church. The greatest is the servant. *Mar 10:44 And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.*

Some people think that being spiritual is to go into an environment isolated from everyday life, a convent or monastery. God never asked His people to hide from the world, just to be in it but not of it. Jesus didn't live in the wilderness although He went there once to be tested.

Spirituality is often thought to be associated with good works, kindness and charity, the Mother Theresa's of this world but that too is wrong.

Spirituality is linked to obedience. *1Co 14:37 If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.* People who reject the teachings of the Apostles are not spiritual, they are carnal or fleshly. *1Co 3:1 And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.*

The purpose of God's word in our lives is to elevate us above the world and to bless us in heaven with spiritual blessings. *Eph 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:*

The condition that Solomon lays down for the receiving of God's spirit is a response of His word. *Pro 1:23 Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.* This is the great spiritual exercise that will validate all of our good deeds.

The mark of a Christian is that he has the ears of a sheep and follows his master. *Joh 10:26 But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. Joh 10:27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:* However religious people may pretend to be, however learned, you may hold the glass of God's word against their lives and you may rightly judge if they have the spirit in their lives. If you are at all uncertain beware of their teaching. Remember our observations on the decline in religion over the last century. It happened within the churches because Christians listened to men who had laid aside the truth.

Pro 2:1 My son, if thou wilt receive my words

Pro 2:1 My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; Pro 2:2 So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; Pro 2:3 Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; Pro 2:4 If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures;

Solomon encourages us to be "mirrors" to reflect His wisdom and "prospectors" mining His wisdom. Of all of the things that life offers us, we should above all search out the wisdom of God. You will of course be taught otherwise. Fame and riches are the goals of this life. Let us listen to Solomon because he knew what it was like to be very, very rich. *Ecc 2:8 I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the*

delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts. Ecc 2:9 So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. Ecc 2:10 And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour. Ecc 2:11 Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun. Ecc 2:12 And I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness, and folly: for what can the man do that cometh after the king? even that which hath been already done. Ecc 2:13 Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness. It did not bring him very much comfort in life, to the contrary it was the source of more trouble. Ecc 5:10 If you love money and wealth, you will never be satisfied with what you have. This doesn't make sense either. Ecc 5:11 The more you have, the more everyone expects from you. Your money won't do you any good - others will just spend it for you. Ecc 5:12 If you have to work hard for a living, you can rest well at night, even if you don't have much to eat. But if you are rich, you can't even sleep. Ecc 5:13 I have seen something terribly unfair. People get rich, but it does them no good.

Obviously, you need money (silver) to stay alive, you must work in order to feed your family but that should be seen as a secondary labour. Your first labour is to find wisdom as a man looks to find silver. The Christian man or woman goes to work to support their religious habit not their secular habits.

The Westminster confession of Faith issued in a Catechism, in which the first question posed is: “What is the chief end of man?”

For many in this world, it is to become rich and famous. This week (August 2005) an Irish woman won the European lottery, netting something like 77 million Euros. No doubt it will change her life completely and she will probably do some very nice things with her winnings. Yet if she, at the end of her life, even though she should find Christ but has not found true riches in God’s wisdom, she will enter eternity a much poorer person.

The “chief end of man” is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. That is why we were made and how we function the best. All else in life should work in support of that supreme goal.

Pro 2:10 When wisdom entereth into thine heart

Pro 2:10 When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; Pro 2:11 Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee:

Wisdom is a deliverer, a saviour from foolishness. If you pick up a newspaper you will find it full of the accounts of folly. Some of the stupidity is even funny in a sad way, for example the thief who stole from a store selling surveillance cameras, to the tragic killing by a policeman demonstrating Jujitsu to his son. What was he thinking? Or more importantly what was he not thinking? The

tragedies and follies of life can be traced back to the lack of common sense and common decency that God encourages in our lives.

The verses before us also say that discretion shall preserve thee. To be discreet is “to exercise wise conduct and management, cautious discernment, especially as to matters of propriety and self controlled manners”

The idea that discretion involved caution or carefulness suggests that we should take time before we act, to consider the consequences of our actions. There is a proverb that says “marry in haste, repent at leisure”. Someone who jumps quickly into marriage without taking time to understand the consequences will have a lot of time to reflect upon his stupidity afterwards when he is forced to live with the consequences of a bad decision. Much of the foolishness and sadness we read about could have been avoided if the person had stopped to think about the consequences of their actions.

The policeman father who stabbed his own son may have avoided the consequences. When people say, “if only I hadn’t done that” it often indicates that they had not weighed the consequences.

When Proverbs says, “That the wicked shall be cut off from the earth”, it often happens as a consequence of their own actions. *Pro 2:22 But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it.*

Pro 3:1 My son, forget not my law

Pro 3:1 My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments: Pro 3:2 For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee.

When we compared Proverbs and Ecclesiastes we thought that we were dealing with two different authors however we saw that Solomon was giving us two views of life, a godless view and a godly view.

Look at the joyless and vexed life described in Ecclesiastes. *Ecc 2:16 For there is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever; seeing that which now is in the days to come shall all be forgotten. And how dieth the wise man? as the fool. Ecc 2:17 Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me: for all is vanity and vexation of spirit. Ecc 2:18 Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun: because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me. Ecc 2:19 And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? yet shall he have rule over all my labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have shewed myself wise under the sun. This is also vanity. Ecc 2:20 Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labour which I took under the sun. Ecc 2:21 For there is a man whose labour is in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in equity; yet to a man that hath not laboured therein shall he leave it for his portion. This also is vanity and a great evil. Ecc 2:22 For what hath man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the sun? Ecc 2:23 For all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity. Ecc 2:24 There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God. Ecc 2:25 For who can eat, or who else*

can hasten hereunto, more than I? Ecc 2:26 For God giveth to a man that is good in his sight wisdom, and knowledge, and joy: but to the sinner he giveth travail, to gather and to heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God. This also is vanity and vexation of spirit.

You can almost hear the sighs of despair as the writer strains at life to filter some drops of comfort from a meaningless existence. How different is the man of Proverbs. *Pro 3:1 My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments: Pro 3:2 For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee. Pro 3:3 Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart: Pro 3:4 So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man. Pro 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. Pro 3:6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.* It is positive and upbeat, purposeful and satisfying.

We might observe the many benefits of a life lived with God. *Pro 10:22 The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it.* Life is more successful when lived under God's rules and God's rules mean making changes in our lives.

During my recent visit to Ghana I held a two day workshop for a community group. I also added some life skills advice. I gave everyone a pocket size notebook for the work but I asked them to keep the front page empty. On this page I asked them to write 3 goals for the coming year. I also asked them to write 3 good reasons why they wanted to achieve these goals. Then, and this is the important point, I asked them to write 3 things that they would need to change in their lives to achieve their goals. The point is that for many people goals that are not achieved are a result of an incompatibility between the state of the individuals and the end that they desire to achieve. Change is required.

Solomon is advising us that as we are, with our own understanding, we are directionless. Leaning on the Lord, that is trusting the Lord, His ways and His wisdom, is a key to finding meaning, purpose and direction in life. No vanity here!

David found the stability that God brings to life. *Psa 16:8 I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.* God was in front of him so he followed God. As he looked upon his God, he was changed. *2Co 3:18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. "Changed from glory into glory, 'till at last we see thy Face".*

If life is boring, vanity, sorrow, travail and grief – its time to change.

Pro 4:1 Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father

Pro 4:1 Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding. Pro 4:2 For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law. Pro 4:3 For I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother. Pro 4:4 He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live. Pro 4:5 Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it

not; neither decline from the words of my mouth. Pro 4:6 Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee. Pro 4:7 Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding. Pro 4:8 Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her.

Solomon has been labouring this point in the past few chapters of Proverbs. For him it is the starting point of a sound journey through life. David taught his son Solomon good things, principally things about his God. As a child Solomon would have seen how his father lived his life. He would have seen the trials and tribulations of the family, the rebellion against David, his departure from Jerusalem and being deposed by his own son Absalom. He would have seen the intrigues and duplicities of the royal household but above all he would have seen in David a steadfast honesty, wisdom, justice and care for his people.

He would also have heard his father's music showing him in a unique way what was in his father's heart towards God. When he was fleeing Jerusalem with his father Solomon would have heard his father comforting himself in God, turning despair to victory. Solomon may have been the first person to hear the words of this song? *Psa 3:1 A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son. LORD, how are they increased that trouble me! many are they that rise up against me.*

Solomon would have seen the weakness of his father and heard about the sin he committed against his mother's first husband Uriah the Hittite. But he would have seen that despite his imperfection he had an honest heart. David did not hide his faults or his sins. He even wrote about them to help others when they fell (Psalm 51).

David was a robust leader. In the American Civil War on the battlefields of Manassas (July 21st 1861), General Bee observed the character of a fellow officer, Thomas Jackson. He was an inspiration, "Look men" he said, "There is Jackson standing like a stone wall! Let us determine to die here and we will conquer!" That's how Jackson became known as "Stonewall" Jackson. David was a solid character and an example to his son Solomon.

Perhaps the greatest complement that David received was by the imitation of his son. David was a father to follow. Solomon looks back in the passage before us and writes without one regret about his upbringing. It may well have been this blessed nursery that was the spark to ignite the desire that made Solomon the wisest man the world has ever known.

Pro 4:7 Wisdom is the principal thing

Pro 4:7 Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.

We see how Solomon would have looked into his father's life and seen all of this wisdom in practice and his father's insistence that he embrace it also. Do you know what it was that made Solomon a

King? It was this very training. He had older brothers but their nature and ways did not fit them for kingship. For some reason, the other sons of David did not follow in their father's footsteps.

Solomon goes on to tell us about the perils of bad company. David's last words to his son were along these lines. *1Ki 2:1 Now the days of David drew nigh that he should die; and he charged Solomon his son, saying, 1Ki 2:2 I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and shew thyself a man; 1Ki 2:3 And keep the charge of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself: 1Ki 2:4 That the LORD may continue his word which he spake concerning me, saying, If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail thee (said he) a man on the throne of Israel.*

What makes a good King? If I asked you to write a job specification and training for a king what would it contain? We find some answers in Deuteronomy. *Deu 17:14 When thou art come unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me; Deu 17:15 Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the LORD thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother. Deu 17:16 But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the LORD hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way. Deu 17:17 Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold. Deu 17:18 And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites: Deu 17:19 And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them: Deu 17:20 That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel.*

The major issue was to become familiar with the word of God. Young Muslims are taught their Koran by heart. They can quote it verbatim. How shameful that we Christians fall so far short of this.

A good king had to write his own copy of the Bible and he was to read it every day and it was to govern his passions and his actions. It would sustain him and prolong his days and he would learn that he was no better than anyone else in His Kingdom.

The Bible is a King Maker in God's eyes. Do you think that you could take over the rule of a nation? Become a King or Queen. You should because you have had the same training as Solomon. That is why Jesus calls us Kings. *Rev 1:6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

I have met Christians with low self esteem and lack of confidence. They are not living as Kings and have failed to grasp where God has elevated them.

I tell you, live as Kings because God intends you to. Hold your head up as a ruler of men should. Make the Bible your own, don't just hold to what other men say it is and be confident that you hold the truth for yourself. Dig your own well and drink daily and copiously from it.

Pro 5:1 My son, attend unto my wisdom

Pro 5:1 My son, attend unto my wisdom, and bow thine ear to my understanding: Pro 5:2 That thou mayest regard discretion, and that thy lips may keep knowledge.

I will not labour the theme of wisdom and righteousness but leave that to you, since the point has been strongly made. For this time I ask the question "why did Solomon fail to take his own advice on women and the advice of God" (Deut 17). His multiple marriages became a sin. *Neh 13:23 In those days also saw I Jews that had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab: Neh 13:24 And their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people. Neh 13:25 And I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves. Neh 13:26 Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? yet among many nations was there no king like him, who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel: nevertheless even him did outlandish women cause to sin. Neh 13:27 Shall we then hearken unto you to do all this great evil, to transgress against our God in marrying strange wives?*

The issue is not that polygamy is a sin but the apostasy of an unequal relationship will turn the heart. The secret of a successful Christian husband is a faithful Christian wife! The unequal yoke (heterozygous) is forbidden for good reason and Solomon reaped the reward of disobedience.

2Co 6:14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?..... 1Ki 11:11 Wherefore the LORD said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. 1Ki 11:12 Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son. 1Ki 11:13 Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; but will give one tribe to thy son for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen. 1Ki 11:14 And the LORD stirred up an adversary unto Solomon, Hadad the Edomite: he was of the king's seed in Edom.

The problem became acute in his old age. *1Ki 11:4 For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father.* What might the reasons for this have been? We may speculate:

- He became too big for his boots and this is a disease of Kings. *1Sa 15:17 And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the LORD anointed thee king over Israel?* He may have thought himself too wise for counsellors and neglected his own proverb. *Pro 11:14 Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.* Here is a danger of age and seniority,

where one has seen it all before, one needs no council. Old people can become old fools.

- Grumpy old men often seek a quiet life. You can observe this in the supermarkets most days. The once active male is now docile, life has been knocked out of him and he is only Lord of the trolley. The wife leads and makes the decisions and choices. Anything for a quiet life. One can imagine the clamour from a 1,000 women all wanting something fixed around the home!

The cost to Solomon's family was huge. *1Ki 11:9 And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice, 1Ki 11:10 And had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the LORD commanded. 1Ki 11:11 Wherefore the LORD said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. 1Ki 11:12 Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son. 1Ki 11:13 Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; but will give one tribe to thy son for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen.*

Within one generation the whole family and kingdom was divided. Solomon's apostasy cascaded down the generations and Israel never again achieved the heights of greatness and power. Solomon knew what to do but he didn't do it!

Pro 6:1 My son, if thou be surety for thy friend

Pro 6:1 My son, if thou be surety for thy friend, if thou hast stricken thy hand with a stranger, Pro 6:2 Thou art snared with the words of thy mouth, thou art taken with the words of thy mouth.

It should not surprise us that how we do business is a religious issue. It is in the way that we conduct our lives that the depth of our belief can be seen. *Jas 2:18 Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.*

Business involves money and this can generate all manner of problems because of the roots of sin, evil and greed in the human soul. Watch how a man uses money and it will tell you a lot about that man and the desires of his soul. Watch how a man indulges himself, how generous he is, how he uses money to bless others or accumulate for himself, how frivolous or how sincere he is in its usage, all will broadcast something of the man.

Solomon warns his son to be cautious in the use of his money on behalf of others. *Pro 6:1 My son, if thou be surety for thy friend, if thou hast stricken thy hand with a stranger, Pro 6:2 Thou art snared with the words of thy mouth, thou art taken with the words of thy mouth. Pro 6:3 Do this now, my son, and deliver thyself, when thou art come into the hand of thy friend; go, humble thyself, and make sure thy friend. Pro 6:4 Give not sleep to thine eyes, nor slumber to thine eyelids. Pro 6:5 Deliver thyself as a roe from the hand of the hunter, and as a bird from the hand of the fowler.*

He wants him to be good at business, and selective in his friends. The warning here is twofold.

1. About the choice of friends.

2. How far you go to help them.

To do this Solomon wants his sons to look along the extended lines of detail and possible actions and consequences of bad decisions. He wants his sons to be careful planners. He doesn't want his sons to jump into situations on behalf of others when it will put them at financial risk.

Let us establish some Biblical points of reference with regard to how we do business. We are firstly advised against debt. *Rom 13:8 Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.* Debt creates obligations. *Pro 22:7 The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.* As a debtor you owe favours and God does not want you to be in the hands of another man.

If through adversity you needed to borrow money or were in the position of a creditor (a lender of money), God had laid down strict rules. *Exo 22:25 If thou lend money to any of my people that is poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as an usurer, neither shalt thou lay upon him usury. Exo 22:26 If thou at all take thy neighbour's raiment to pledge, thou shalt deliver it unto him by that the sun goeth down: Exo 22:27 For that is his covering only, it is his raiment for his skin: wherein shall he sleep? and it shall come to pass, when he crieth unto me, that I will hear; for I am gracious.*

Money lending was to be interest free among the people of God. *Deu 23:19 Thou shalt not lend upon usury to thy brother; usury of money, usury of victuals, usury of any thing that is lent upon usury: Deu 23:20 Unto a stranger thou mayest lend upon usury; but unto thy brother thou shalt not lend upon usury: that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all that thou settest thine hand to in the land whither thou goest to possess it.* Those who did so out of a good heart were actually lending money to God. *Pro 19:17 He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.*

Money was also loaned against a "pledge". So in effect the lender had something of value belonging to the debtor. This principle can be seen in the trade of the "pawn broker".

Debts were limited in time by the festival of the Jubilee (Lev 25). In the year of the Jubilee all debts were cancelled. *Lev 25:25 If thy brother be waxen poor, and hath sold away some of his possession, and if any of his kin come to redeem it, then shall he redeem that which his brother sold. Lev 25:26 And if the man have none to redeem it, and himself be able to redeem it; Lev 25:27 Then let him count the years of the sale thereof, and restore the overplus unto the man to whom he sold it; that he may return unto his possession. Lev 25:28 But if he be not able to restore it to him, then that which is sold shall remain in the hand of him that hath bought it until the year of jubile: and in the jubile it shall go out, and he shall return unto his possession.*

The underlying principle was that all land and property in the nation of Israel was governed and owned by God. The Israelites were tenants.

So to summarise the rules about loans and debt:

1. Avoid it if possible.
2. It was interest free if you were the lender.

3. A pledge was required to secure the loan.
4. It had a limited shelf life.

Turning back to Proverbs 6 we find the same theme echoed in other places. *Pro 11:15 He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it: and he that hateth suretyship is sure. Pro 11:17 The merciful man doeth good to his own soul: but he that is cruel troubleth his own flesh. Pro 11:18 The wicked worketh a deceitful work: but to him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward..... Pro 20:16 Take his garment that is surety for a stranger: and take a pledge of him for a strange woman.*

The issue here is standing in for someone else and taking over someone else's debt. Now of course, there is nothing stopping you from paying another person's debt. This principle is entrenched in the idea of the forgiveness of sin, the forgiveness of trespasses. A beautiful illustration of this is found in Matthew. *Mat 18:23 Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. Mat 18:24 And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. Mat 18:25 But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. Mat 18:26 The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Mat 18:27 Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.* The debt was later reinstated because of the servant's attitude. *Mat 18:34 And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.*

So we must narrow down the meaning of Proverbs 6 to a specific case of debt and loans.

This is one where you make an ill considered and rash decision to stand in for someone who has a debt. This is especially dangerous where you have a limited knowledge of the person and their lifestyle. For example a vagrant who asks you for money for food will more than likely spend it on something else.

You may also find that you are tied into a debt with very high interest rates. Last week (November 2005), I read in the paper of a couple who took a £2,000 loan that escalated into a £100,000 debt after 15 years!

The message of Proverbs 6 is don't rush into help a debtor without careful exploration of the situation. Ask questions:

- Could I meet the conditions of the loan?
- What caused the debt? (You might not want to be morally associated with it).
- What am I getting involved in? Are there other means of sorting the problem?
- What is the character of the person I call "friend". Some people are not worth knowing and will only bring you trouble – sort your "friends" out. Who brings the best and the worst out of you?

And finally if you make the mistake of being a surety get out of it as quickly as possible. Beware of taking on other people's money problems!

Pro 6:6 Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise

Pro 6:6 Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise.

We will with wisdom find an un-written book in our gardens and hedgerows, our fields and rivers. Solomon read it each day and people flocked to hear him. *1Ki 4:32 And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five. 1Ki 4:33 And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes. 1Ki 4:34 And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom.* He learned some very important lessons from life's tiniest teachers. The ants and the fish lectured him on his behaviour so that wherever he went he was spoken to by God.

The Jews could not escape their religious duties in every aspect of their lives. *Deu 6:6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: Deu 6:7 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. Deu 6:8 And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. Deu 6:9 And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.* The "Christianity" we have manufactured today seems to bear no relationship or have any influence on science, business, government and morality.

Our faith should be like Islam where every aspect of life is scrutinised through the glass of God's word. For every trivial conversation you have, try and have one Christian based conversation. Develop a Christian outlook and in look upon life.

To help develop Solomon's approach to creation, every time you look at God's creatures ask Him to give you a Bible lesson or a Bible study.

When God made ants, He made them an example of diligence, providence and organisation. God does not like laziness or sloth. The Hebrew word for sloth and sluggard comes from a root meaning to "recline" or as we might say, be laidback. It is used 17 times in the book of Proverbs so it is clearly a major issue.

We often talk about the Victorian work ethic, but we should talk about the Christian work ethic. We are never encouraged to build a society where healthy able bodied people receive welfare for doing nothing. *2Th 3:7 For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; 2Th 3:8 Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: 2Th 3:9 Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us. 2Th 3:10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. 2Th 3:11 For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. 2Th 3:12 Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus*

Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.

When William Booth started the Salvation Army, work not a charity handout was his method of improvement (see *In Darkest England* page 105ff, extract below).

<https://archive.org/stream/indarkestenglan00bootgoog#page/n118/mode/2up>

I propose to establish in connection with every Food and Shelter Depôt a Workshop or Labour Yard, in which any person who comes destitute and starving will be supplied with sufficient work to enable him to earn the fourpence needed for his bed and board. This is a fundamental feature of the Scheme, and one which I think will commend it to all those who are anxious to benefit the poor by enabling them to help themselves without the demoralising intervention of charitable relief.

Let us take our stand for a moment at the door of one of our Shelters. There comes along a grimy, ragged, footsore tramp, his feet bursting out from the sides of his shoes, his clothes all rags, with filthy shirt and towelled hair. He has been, he tells you, on the tramp for the last three weeks, seeking work and finding none, slept last night on the Embankment, and wants to know if you can give him a bite and a sup, and shelter for the night. Has he any money? Not he; he probably spent the last penny he begged or earned in a pipe of tobacco, with which to dull the cravings of his hungry stomach. What are you to do with this man?

As Solomon gazed down on the tiny ants, scurrying about his palace, God prompted him to make a permanent record for all humanity that in His world success was not achieved by dreaming but by hard work.

Pro 13:4 The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.

Pro 6:12 A naughty person, a wicked man, walketh with a froward mouth.

Pro 6:12 A naughty person, a wicked man, walketh with a froward mouth. Pro 6:13 He winketh with his eyes, he speaketh with his feet, he teacheth with his fingers; Pro 6:14 Frowardness is in his heart, he deviseth mischief continually; he soweth discord.

The Hebrew is literally “Adam Belial”, or “Adam good for nothing”. Paul warns us that those who are sons of Belial are in opposition to Christ. *2Co 6:15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?* What are you doing with unbelievers? One translation says, “Stop forming inappropriate relationships with unbelievers. Can right and wrong be partners? Can light have anything in common with darkness?”

Solomon here warns of the characteristics of “Adam good for nothing” and Paul warns us to avoid him in life.

I don’t know whether you give much thought to the character and qualities of the people you mix with in life? Do they encourage the good in you and bring out the best qualities? Do they inspire you to improve, set examples of how to act and do better? Or do they lower your standards, pull down your faith, mock your God and behave contrary to your beliefs? If so, you should ask yourself why am I in that relationship and why do I encourage it?

“Adam good for nothing” works for his father the devil and he will hesitate at nothing to bring you down. “Adam good for nothing” has a perverse mouth. A perverse mouth does not refer merely to someone who uses English badly or who swears a lot. Perversity is contrast to righteousness and I would say that perversity covers the following in Colossians. *Pro 8:8 All the words of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing froward or perverse in them. Col 3:8 But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.*

Another characteristic of “Adam good for nothing” is that he cannot speak directly but communicates with gestures and innuendo. *Pro 6:13 He winketh with his eyes, he speaketh with his feet, he teacheth with his fingers;* Nod nod, wink, wink! He is not straight forward, probably what we would call crooked and he will suddenly be brought to nothing.

Solomon doesn’t tell us to avoid or have nothing to do with “Adam good for nothing”. It is self evident that we should avoid him.

Pro 6:16 These six things doth the LORD hate

Pro 6:16 These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him:

We now see some of the characteristics that are found in individuals who provoke and exasperate God. We may take it that because God hates them, they are not part of His nature, not part of Christ’s nature and hence should not be found in us.

1. **A proud look** - exalted eyes; those who will not condescend to look on the rest of mankind and having a high opinion of their own worth and merit. One thing that I omitted to point out in a recent ministry on our Kingship (Sunday 23rd October, 2005 Proverbs 4 vv 7-27) was that the Christian kingship differs from the world’s kingship. *Luk 22:25 And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. Luk 22:26 But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.* Kingship in Christ’s Kingdom is the kingship of service and humility.

The rejection of God’s word is an example of pride and as we have seen in our previous ministry this sin wiped out a whole generation of unbelievers and delayed entry into Canaan by 38 years. *1Ti 6:3 If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; Pro 16:18 Pride goeth before*

destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall. The antidote “be clothed with humility”. 1Pe 5:5 Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

2. **A lying tongue** - he who neither loves nor tells truth, “to make a false statement”; Greek **ψεύδομαι**, Act 5:3 *But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Act 5:4 Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.*

We see also in this section that God hates a false witness, a liar who does so on oath or before a body of his peers. Here we are dealing with the individual who disregards truth as a way of life. Lying is a trait of the devil. *Joh 8:44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it*”. The antidote is speaking the truth in love. *Eph 4:15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:*

3. **Hands that shed innocent blood**, whether by murder or by battery. This must also include hatred and intent. *Mat 5:22 But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire*”.

The antidote is love. *1Jo 3:15 Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. 1Jo 4:20 If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?*

4. **A heart that deviseth wicked imaginations** - the heart that fabricates such, lays the foundation, builds upon it, and completes the superstructure of iniquity. The antidote is the fear of God. *Psa 36:1 The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes. Psa 36:2 For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful. Psa 36:3 The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit: he hath left off to be wise, and to do good. Psa 36:4 He deviseth mischief upon his bed; he setteth himself in a way that is not good; he abhorreth not evil.*

5. **Feet that be swift in running to mischief** - he who works iniquity with greediness. The antidote? *1Th 4:11 And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you;*

6. **A false witness that speaketh lies** - one who, even on his oath before a court of justice, tells anything but the truth. Look at the list of quotations below from the president of the United States. Presidential statements, particularly on matters of national security are held to an expectation of the highest standard of truthfulness. A president cannot stretch, twist or distort facts and get away with it. President Lyndon Johnson's distortions of the truth about Vietnam forced him to stand down from re-election. President Richard Nixon's false statements about Watergate forced his resignation. The

antidote is diligence. *Deu 19:18 And the judges shall make diligent inquisition: and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother;*

George Bush stands in a long line of lying politicians.

United Nations Address

September 12, 2002

"Iraq has stockpiled biological and chemical weapons, and is rebuilding the facilities used to make more of those weapons". "We have sources that tell us that Saddam Hussein recently authorized Iraqi field commanders to use chemical weapons -- the very weapons the dictator tells us he does not have."

Radio Address

October 5, 2002

"The Iraqi regime . . . possesses and produces chemical and biological weapons. It is seeking nuclear weapons."

"We know that the regime has produced thousands of tons of chemical agents, including mustard gas, sarin nerve gas, VX nerve gas."

"We've also discovered through intelligence that Iraq has a growing fleet of manned and unmanned aerial vehicles that could be used to disperse chemical or biological weapons across broad areas. We're concerned that Iraq is exploring ways of using these UAVS for missions targeting the United States."

"The evidence indicates that Iraq is reconstituting its nuclear weapons program. Saddam Hussein has held numerous meetings with Iraqi nuclear scientists, a group he calls his "nuclear mujahideen" - his nuclear holy warriors. Satellite photographs reveal that Iraq is rebuilding facilities at sites that have been part of its nuclear program in the past. Iraq has attempted to purchase high-strength aluminum tubes and other equipment needed for gas centrifuges, which are used to enrich uranium for nuclear weapons."

Cincinnati, Ohio Speech

October 7, 2002

"Our intelligence officials estimate that Saddam Hussein had the materials to produce as much as 500 tons of sarin, mustard and VX nerve agent."

State of the Union Address

January 28, 2003

"Intelligence gathered by this and other governments leaves no doubt that the Iraq regime continues to possess and conceal some of the most lethal weapons ever devised."

There are, it has been said "lies, damn lies and statistics". There are also lies, damn lies and lying rulers.

Seven are an abomination unto him – Heb נפשו naphsho, "to his soul." The seventh is, he that soweth discord among brethren - he who troubles the peace of a family, of a village, of the state; all

who, by lies and misrepresentations, strive to make men's minds evil-affected towards their brethren.

Pro 6:20 My son, keep thy father's commandment

Pro 6:20 My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother: Pro 6:21 Bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck. Pro 6:22 When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee. Pro 6:23 For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life:

When we are young, we always view our parents as “going on at us”. Do this, do that, yet it is for good reason because there is in us folly when we are young, foolishness and the proof of original sin. *Pro 22:15 Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.* I am surprised that I survived my childhood considering the foolish things that I did, playing on railway lines, making explosives, using knives and guns and making fires. I did none of my foolishness in front of my parents because I knew what they would say. I knew the law of my mother.

As we grow from childhood into adults (and don't ask me when this occurs) we begin to resent our parents even more because we want to take charge of our own lives and this inevitably leads to conflict. I would say that the worst years of my life were between the ages of 13 and 17. It is a half way house, a shadow world between childhood and independent adulthood. I have watched the young birds in the nest as they grow. They begin to stretch and jostle, flapping their wings, testing their strength. Ready to fly, yet not ready to fly and all the time the parents grow more frantic in their attempt to appease the growing appetites of their young. I imagine at this stage in their birdlike thinking, they wonder “why did we ever have chicks?” The chicks want to go but the parents want to do their duty until at last they are free. But they in turn become just like their parents.

The offspring of a parent represent an investment. *Exo 21:30 If there be laid on him a sum of money, then he shall give for the ransom of his life whatsoever is laid upon him.* You young people represent years of work, care, nurturing, protection and love. What would you think if one day you came home to find your home a smouldering ruin with your mother and father sitting outside smiling as the last flames crackled? You ask them why they did it and they say “Its not important it doesn't matter”. Would you not question their sanity as to why they had no respect for such a huge investment of their money? Of course you would. If one morning you saw your father beating the car into pieces with a sledge hammer would you wonder at his sense of values?

But are you not more value than a house? I say this to help you understand the verses here in the book of Proverbs. Keeping hold of Mum and Dad's words will add to your experience. It will lift you above the others. When President Kennedy addressed the nation in 1962 on the space programme, he said *“We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win, and the others, too. “*

Growing up is a challenge like going to the Moon. It is not easy, it is hard but it is made endurable if you accept that it is hard. If you want to know what the first astronaut thought when Kennedy's dream was realised and Neil Armstrong looked back to the earth from whence he came, then one day you will when you look back on your lives today and see how far you have travelled.

On reflecting about parenting, I considered that there was passive and active parenting. Passive parenting gets on with the job but active parenting gets on with the job while explaining the job. A lot of children and young people never get to understand their parents because their parents never discuss the program with them. Biblical parenting is active. *Deu 6:7 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. Deu 6:8 And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. Deu 6:9 And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.*

It would be wrong to assume that this is just "Bible bashing", it is talking and reasoning about all aspects of life as we see in the book of Proverbs. For example, the consequences of lazing in bed, concern for others and about being fair. *Pro 6:9 How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Pro 19:17 He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again. Pro 20:23 Divers weights are an abomination unto the LORD; and a false balance is not good.*

When God began dealing with His children, He took the trouble to record the rules of the house (Exodus 20). Every "child" knew the rules and the rules were the same for each child. There was a single standard and it was non-negotiable and Father was to be obeyed.

Why though should we obey God and our parents? *Joh 14:21 He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.* The answer is, because we love them. Do your children love you? You would be shocked if I suggested otherwise but I can tell you that the disobedience that you experience is proof that they do not love you as God intended.

Why should they love you? What is in you that is loveable and how do you make yourself loveable? Let us consider this. When you want to impress someone, for example a girl or boy, you inevitably concentrate on two aspects of your person, namely, your disposition (attitude) and your appearance. You will show your disposition as kind, attentive, thoughtful, generous, protective, and helpful. No one in their right mind loves cruel, inattentive, mean, selfish bullies! *1Co 13:4 Love is kind and patient, never jealous, boastful, proud, or rude. Love isn't selfish or quick tempered. It doesn't keep a record of wrongs that others do. Love rejoices in the truth, but not in evil. Love is always supportive, loyal, hopeful, and trusting. Love never fails! (CEV)*

If as parents you are not loved, consider whether you exhibit the traits of love. May I also extend this principle to other relationships such as marriage! If love is lacking in your marriage, check out what is missing from the list in 1 Corinthians chapter 13.

How do you appear? Certainly when we want to be attractive we take extra care on our outward

appearance. Girls will not like you boys if you are scruffy and smelly with dirty teeth. Even more important is the inner person but this has to be revealed. *1Pe 3:3 Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; 1Pe 3:4 But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.*

How much do your children know about you or to use a modern phrase “where you are coming from?” What made you what you are? There is a chasm between those plastic figures of Jesus and my flesh and bone Saviour who died for me. How real are you to your children? It was only after my father’s death that I was told about his childhood and why my mother never went to work. He didn’t want his children to have the same upbringing as he did and come home to a cold and empty house. That is a loveable thing to do but it received no recognition because it was never shared. I think that knowing the background, struggles and suffering of parents can generate love in ones offspring. It creates and empathy and drawing together as we see our parents as really caring for us.

The difference between the disciples at the crucifixion and the rest of the people, who mocked Jesus, was that the disciples were sad and sorrowful. To the crowd Jesus was part of the Roman circus, a spectacle to be laughed at and mocked but to the disciples He was a friend that they knew and had come to love by being in His presence and learning where He was coming from and going to.

One of the things that children do is to convince themselves that parental discipline is by definition grievous and the role of a parent is to make them unhappy, so the first step to love is to convince them otherwise. *1Jo 5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.*

In our world we find that law without some measure of detection and enforcement does not work. People do not respect laws unless there is a probability of being caught and punished. Punishment or sanctions develop respect for the law. Parents who do not sanction are not godly parents.

God’s justice also requires restitution, so that the balance of justice is restored, hence justice is often portrayed holding scales. There is a price to pay for breaking the law, wages as the scripture puts it. *Rom 6:23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.* If ever you think that breaking the law or breaking the rules is not an issue of justice and can be lightly passed over, look at Christ on the cross and consider that God spared not His son. *Rom 8:32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*

If as Christian parents we are to teach respect for God and His laws, we must show the same strength of character in upholding our own rules. Disobedience in children is often a reflection of indifference in the parents.

We suggested that Love is the key to obedience and love is forgiving. *1Pe 4:8 And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.* What does it mean “covering a multitude of sins”? I was reminded of God covering Moses so that he was not

destroyed by the awesome glory of God. *Ex 33:22 And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by:* God was protective of Moses.

This inspired Augustus Toplady's hymn:

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee;
Let the water and the blood,
From Thy wounded side which flowed,
Be of sin **the double** cure;
Save from wrath and make me pure

Love is protective. It just does not punish without reconciling and putting the sins away (The DOUBLE cure), it does not put them in an album where they are continually put on display. *Heb 8:12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.* By covering sins, we are sending a strong message that we are really genuine in our concern for the welfare of our charges and not just concerned with punishment. This is the CURE that makes me pure. The wrong view that people get of Jehovah in the Old Testament that He is only interested in going around bashing and killing people.

How do you as parents deal with the aftermath of punishment? One of your rules has been broken, you apply your punishment....then what? Do you just let it go until the next offence? What do you do about reconciliation? Did not the shepherd whose sheep had gone astray search to bring it back into the fold? *Luk 15:4 What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?* Did the sinner never hear the words "I forgive you"? Was it left hanging in the balance? I never once in my childhood ever heard my parents say the wrong that I did was forgiven but then they were not Christian at that stage. How do you view people who behave like that to you as adults? Are they loveable?

How awful your life would be if knowing that Christ forgave sins you never heard from His lips that you were forgiven? There would be no comfort in the relationship, only fear.

If your children do wrong, forgive them and tell them they are forgiven. Use this as an opportunity to let Christ shine rather than yourself. Exercise the ministry of reconciliation. *2Co 5:18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;* It is the first step to building a good relationship.

As parents we often react to infringements of our rules to satisfy our own feelings. We selfishly neglect the wider issue of the righteousness of God. If we are to be just, we must encompass the wider issue of justice from God's position.

Sanctions are always relevant to the crime. The punishment fits the crime.

- *Jer 34:17 Therefore thus saith the LORD; Ye have not hearkened unto me, in proclaiming*

liberty, every one to his brother, and every man to his neighbour: behold, I proclaim a liberty for you, saith the LORD, to the sword, to the pestilence, and to the famine; and I will make you to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth.

- *Exo 21:18 And if men strive together, and one smite another with a stone, or with his fist, and he die not, but keepeth his bed: Exo 21:19 If he rise again, and walk abroad upon his staff, then shall he that smote him be quit: only he shall pay for the loss of his time, and shall cause him to be thoroughly healed. Exo 21:20 And if a man smite his servant, or his maid, with a rod, and he die under his hand; he shall be surely punished. Exo 21:21 Notwithstanding, if he continue a day or two, he shall not be punished: for he is his money.*
- *Exo 21:22 If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart from her, and yet no mischief follow: he shall be surely punished, according as the woman's husband will lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. Exo 21:23 And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life, Exo 21:24 Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, Exo 21:25 Burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.*
- Deterrent and restitution. *Exo 22:1 If a man shall steal an ox, or a sheep, and kill it, or sell it; he shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep. Exo 21:12 He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death.*

Forgiveness requires the balance of justice restored and the law obeyed, hence justice is portrayed with the scales of a balance.

There are no prisons in the Bible. Taking away personal freedom (other than by death) is not God's way. This requires thought and effort. Punishment must fit the offence and always in the process is the need to restore the relationship.

If we are concerned for the present state of our children surely we should also be concerned for their future state. Our current concerns should look to a future state. Are we working towards that?

While Christ is ever concerned for the present welfare of His disciples, He has a longer vision in mind. It is all for a greater purpose. Jesus prays for the future. *Joh 17:20 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;* What is the point of just fitting our children for this world and losing them in the next?

Should we not begin to plan the future? Many men lay in cellars wines that they will never drink. They lay them down to mature for their children to appreciate. Others plant trees that will be growing when they are long dead but their children will harvest the fruit. Others make financial arrangements to secure a comfortable future for their children.

God in the Older Testament prepared for the future of His people. In some sense, the future dictated the circumstances of the present. What are your long-term aspirations for your children? What do

you want for them? What do you pray about their spouse, their career and their future circumstances?

Paul encourages us to pray for the circumstances of life that will prosper us in godliness. *1Ti 2:1 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; 1Ti 2:2 For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. 1Ti 2:3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;* Ask yourselves where success lies? Is it in a fat pay check or a fat heart towards God?

One question that we did not fully answer when studying these verses and I leave it to you to consider and that is “Why did the father want his children to follow in this way”?

Pro 6:23 For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light

Pro 6:23 For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life: Pro 6:24 To keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman. Pro 6:25 Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids. Pro 6:26 For by means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread: and the adulteress will hunt for the precious life. Pro 6:27 Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Pro 6:28 Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned? Pro 6:29 So he that goeth in to his neighbour's wife; whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent.

Here we have the great lecher, lecturing and it is a shame that Solomon became a castaway on this very shore. Perhaps, like Bill Clinton he was in denial, “I did not have sexual relations with that woman”! There is a lot of truth in the comment of the cartoon character Homer Simpson that “a woman is like a can of beer, once you have one you have to have another”. It defines our age and as Solomon noted that faithful men and virtuous women are a rare commodity. *Pro 20:6 Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find? Pro 31:10 who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.*

Samson is an illustration of a great man “brought to a piece of bread”. Samson was a womaniser so when it says that he fell in love with Delilah I would imagine it to be more towards lust than respect. *Jdg 16:4 And it came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah.* One thing is clear in support of that statement,

- a) They didn’t love enough to marry each other and
- b) They did not communicate their hearts to each other.

They kept secrets and lied to each other. Samson took “fire in his bosom”. *Jdg 16:6 And Delilah said to Samson, Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength lieth, and wherewith thou mightest be bound to afflict thee.*

Betrayed by Delilah he ended his days a blind man mocked by the world but he must have found a place for repentance as he is not forgotten in the Pantheon of the faithful servants. *Heb 11:32 And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and*

of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets:

I imagine that Solomon must have reflected on his own father's life when he penned these verses. Solomon was himself the product of an illegitimate relationship when his father lusted in his heart after his mother Bathsheba. *2Sa 11:2 And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon. 2Sa 11:3 And David sent and enquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite? 2Sa 11:4 And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness: and she returned unto her house.* It was not love it was lust and David was walking on hot coals and got his feet burned, in the process murdering a good man Uriah the Hittite.

Joseph in Egypt naively relied on his own goodness in the face of an adulterous woman, Potiphar's wife. It is a lesson that not only must we avoid temptation, do not even get yourself into a position of compromise however pure your heart is. You cannot anticipate the motives of others.

Not content to learn a lesson from his father, Solomon goes out of his way to experience the problem for himself. He accumulates wives like cattle and they in turn draw him away from his God and his kingdom. *1Ki 11:6 And Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD, as did David his father. 1Ki 11:7 Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon. 1Ki 11:8 And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods.*

No good comes out an illicit relationship. The 20th Century is strewn with its wreckage that leads to divorce, bankruptcy, disgrace, isolation and in many cases the gallows, yet men never learn. I doubt if any looking back on their actions in the light of events would say it was worth it.

God and nature conspire against men and women who are unfaithful. The rise in sexually transmitted diseases and especially HIV/Aids, illegitimacy and abortion is a monument to much of this activity.

Pro 7:9 In the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night

Pro 7:9 In the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night: Pro 7:10 And, behold, there met him a woman with the attire of an harlot, and subtil of heart. Pro 7:11 (She is loud and stubborn; her feet abide not in her house: Pro 7:12 Now is she without, now in the streets, and lieth in wait at every corner.)

Again in the 7th Chapter of Proverbs Solomon warns his son of the dangers of adultery and unfaithfulness in marriage. O that he had himself had heeded his own words! Perhaps he writes so much about it here because it was something that he struggled with.

In Africa, I see it so often, the aging white man with his young African girlfriend both taking advantage of each other and I despise them for what they represent. It is not love but opportunity and with that opportunity there are many risks. These women are predators and as in the Proverb, they lie in wait for their prey. *Pro 7:22 He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks;* Even the strongest of men are brought to nothing as we saw in the case of Samson and Delilah.

On my recent visit to Ghana I was approached by a “strange” woman by the pool at the hotel. These people are practiced and skilled in making conversation and flattery so I make sure that if I am outside, I am in a position where uninvited people cannot sit next to me. I sit on my own. I wear sunglasses and so make no eye contact. I don’t readily engage in conversation with strangers. As I said to a colleague I represent my organization, my country and my faith. If I compromise that my credibility is gone.

We live in an immoral world that thinks nothing of these issues. What is wrong with it they ask? What is wrong with casual relationships and casual pleasure? To this the writer tells us it is the road to hell! *Pro 7:27 Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.*

Man made in the image of God is made for faith and right. He is made to make permanent relationships in this life and marriage is Gods’ goal for men not casual relationships. Paul reveals the great mystery of Christ. *Eph 5:32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.*

When we move outside of the relationships that God ordered we are moving outside of the Church and Kingdom. What exists outside of the Kingdom of God? Hell! Some have said that the road to hell is paved with good intent. We are taught here that it is paved with infidelity, stupidity, lust and unfaithfulness. In this test of faith we see all the sins drawn together and we are warned to take care!

Pro 8:22 The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way

Pro 8:22 The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old.

This is a verse which has played an important part in the history of Christian dogma. Wisdom reveals himself as preceding all creation, stamped upon it all, one with God, yet in some way distinguishable from Him as the object of His love. *Pro 8:30 Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him;*

John declares that all which Wisdom speaks of Himself here, was true in its highest sense of the Word that became flesh. *Joh 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. Joh 1:2 The same was in the beginning with God. Joh 1:3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.* Christ is the wisdom of God. *Col 1:15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:*

Wisdom is the foundation of our Universe and the foundation of our existence. What does this mean? The definition of wisdom is: “The quality of being wise; knowledge, and the capacity to make due use of it; knowledge of the best ends and the best means; discernment and judgment; discretion; sagacity; skill; dexterity.”

We may understand that there is no randomness or arbitrariness in the structure of the Universe. It is packed full of deeper meanings that take us to the very core of God’s being and purpose. Our problem is that we often find creation a hard book to read. One author has described nature as “God’s hand in a glove”, meaning I take it, that God’s designs are in some measure cloaked, but no less real.

Pro 8:12 I wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions. Knowing this also makes our science more exciting and deeper in meaning. Our science and discovery will be made richer because we shall not be observing mere chemical and physical facts, plain knowledge. We shall be learning about the deeper qualities of God. Qualities of understanding, truth, righteousness, prudence, counsel, justice and instruction.

We might take a topical example to illustrate the point. H5N1 Bird flu is a virus (Latin for venom). We discover that it mutates from animals to men and uses the cells of the human body to regenerate and multiply. It cannot breed on its own, it needs a host. I am reminded of the origins of sin where the virus of the serpent entered the heart of Adam and multiplied to his seed, mutating into more virulent forms and manifestations. There is a drug that locks the virus into a cell to stop it multiplying (Tamiflu) and it is possible to vaccinate against the illness. Like sin, there is a remedy that can quarantine it, lock it up and fight against it.

Postscript 10th April 2014. “Today we found out that Tamiflu doesn't work so well after all. Roche, the drug company behind it, withheld vital information on its clinical trials for half a decade, but the Cochrane Collaboration, a global not-for-profit organisation of 14,000 academics, finally obtained all the information. Putting the evidence together, it has found that Tamiflu has little or no impact on complications of flu infection, such as pneumonia.” My illustration in 2005 falls short and perhaps it should be used to illustrate another Proverb. *Pro 21:6 The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death.*

There are moral lessons that emerge from our observations. Did God in His wisdom make Creation so as to reinforce the lessons of His revealed word? I think so. *Pro 8:21 That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures.*

Pro 8:35 For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death.

Pro 9:1 Wisdom hath builded her house

Pro 9:1 Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars:

The text before us was used by T.E. Lawrence as the title for his history of the Arab revolt during the Great War, "The seven pillars of Wisdom". Here it has nothing to do with Arab cities.

The book of Proverbs again labours the point of the importance of wisdom by contrasting wisdom with folly. *Pro 9:1 Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars: Pro 9:2 She hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table. Pro 9:3 She hath sent forth her maidens: she crieth upon the highest places of the city, Pro 9:4 Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, Pro 9:5 Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled. Pro 9:6 Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding. Pro 9:13 A foolish woman is clamorous: she is simple, and knoweth nothing. Pro 9:14 For she sitteth at the door of her house, on a seat in the high places of the city, Pro 9:15 To call passengers who go right on their ways: Pro 9:16 Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: and as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, Pro 9:17 Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant. Pro 9:18 But he knoweth not that the dead are there; and that her guests are in the depths of hell.*

Both houses invite their guests.

Freedom of speech allows the freedom of ideas to circulate but that does not mean the circulation of truth. The great tool of the age, the internet and access to the worldwide web means that there has been no time in history where access to such a vast amount of information has been possible. There are so many voices crying out for your attention. The crying voices also add credibility by the status of their adherents. Surely we say to ourselves, it must have an element of truth because these believers aren't stupid, are they? What about the rich and famous are they stupid?

Richard Gere is a Buddhist. Madonna, Elizabeth Taylor (formally Christian Scientist), have been involved with the Kabala Center led by Philip Berg. Tom Cruise, John Travolta, Lisa Marie Presley, Kirstie Alley are all Scientologists. Gwyneth Paltrow's yoga teacher Eddie Stern has been compared to a "cult like" guru. Olympian Carl Lewis and rocker Carlos Santana were once devoted to cult leader Sri Chinmoy (independent guru). Rock singer Courtney Love has been linked to "Yogi BhaJan" of 3HO and "Friends" actress Courtney Cox is now following some sci-fi guru named Stephen Lewis. Gene Rodenberry was a humanist. The Williams sisters are Jehovah's Witnesses. Magic Johnson is an Seventh Day Adventist. Marc Almond is a Satanist. (Almond later stated in a 2016 interview with *Loud and Quiet* that the initiation was "a theatrical joke that got a bit out of hand" and that he is not a Satanist.)

There is no doubt that many people are led into error by following their heroes as they feed off of their lives. One indication of the popularity of the famous people is the amount of media coverage they are given and the number of magazines devoted to their lives and lifestyles (surely death style?).

Choose your heroes and role models very carefully. Ask yourselves what they are leading you into, ask yourselves where they are coming from? Who should you take as an example? *Jas 5:10 Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. 1Co 11:1 Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.*

If you want someone to look up to and listen to find them in the faithful men of the Bible, not in the false world of popular sinners. But most of all take for yourself the example of Christ.

Pro 10:1 A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother

Pro 10:1 The proverbs of Solomon. A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother. Pro 15:20 A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish man despiseth his mother. Pro 17:25 A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him.

The Proverbs of Solomon. Some ancient manuscripts of the Vulgate have *Proverbiorum liber secundus*, "The second book of the Proverbs." The preceding nine chapters may only be considered as an introduction to the Proverbs of Solomon which appears to commence at the tenth chapter.

A wise or clever son brightens or cheers his father, a stupid son depresses his mother. There is implied in this passage a difference in the way men and woman approach the behaviour of their offspring and how they react. I believe that the bond mothers have with their offspring is different to that of a father. Men tend to pragmatism while women tend to emotion. We suffer in different ways.

I believe that the father of the prodigal son knew exactly how his son would behave with his inheritance. *Luk 15:11 And he said, A certain man had two sons: Luk 15:12 And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. Luk 15:13 And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. Luk 15:14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. Luk 15:15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. Luk 15:16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.* He was prepared to let him go and suffer the consequences of his folly. I do not believe his mother would have allowed the same course of action. The maternal instinct would have protected the son from himself and that special bond is seen in the cry of the dying on the battlefield. "Mother!" I have never heard of a soldier crying for his father.

The mother is programmed to desire children and nowhere can this desire be better seen than in the person of Hannah or of the suicidal Rachel. *1Sa 1:15 And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD. Gen 30:1 And when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister; and said unto Jacob, Give me children, or else I die.*

The well worn phrase uttered by many women “you don’t understand me” is so true especially in regards to Elkanah, who thought himself sufficient comfort for Hannah in her distress. *1Sa 1:8 Then said Elkanah her husband to her, Hannah, why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? am not I better to thee than ten sons?*

This bond of mother and son is different to that of a father and so we might naturally expect different reactions from each parent. *Isa 49:15 Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee,* Mothers can be far more forgiving because of this but also far more protective.

Fathers and mothers have different perspectives on life because of their roles. David’s father Jesse had no problem sending his son onto the Judean hillside alone to protect the sheep from bears and lions. A few knocks wouldn’t hurt the boy. I am sure that his mother had other views.

The father encourages that independence that will make his son self-sufficient, in turn to head and lead his own family but the mother would keep her son with her forever. Fathers then are more naturally “glad” of the wisdom that leads to personal development. It moves the son towards the father’s goal but further away from the mother’s.

The father may be grieved by his son’s folly but being a man he understands that sons are often like that. Sons take more risks than daughters (easily demonstrated in road deaths), they are charged with different hormones. Mothers groan under the strain of their continuous care for their sons a care that grows even more acute when the son is behaving foolishly.

So it is then that “A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish son *is* the heaviness of his mother.”

Pro 10:2 Treasures of wickedness profit nothing

Pro 10:2 Treasures of wickedness profit nothing: but righteousness delivereth from death. The LORD will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish: but he casteth away the substance of the wicked.

There is nothing wrong with being rich, it is the attitude towards riches and how they are gained that become moral issues in the scripture. The rich young ruler had problems with his attitude to his wealth and he is not dissimilar to many of us. *Mat 19:21 Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. Mat 19:22 But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.* Here is a test of attitude, what would you feel like if Jesus had asked you to get rid of your wealth?

How we gain wealth is another issue. Do we get ours through good honest labour or do we cheat, steal and lie our way to riches? For the Christian many careers are unacceptable to God. What careers? Prostitute, robber, thief, hit man, gossip columnist, astrologer, pornographer, software pirate etc...

This Proverb is nowhere better illustrated than in the life of Judas Iscariot. *Mat 27:3 Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, Mat 27:4 Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. Mat 27:5 And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself. Mat 27:6 And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. Mat 27:7 And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Mat 27:8 Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day. Mat 27:9 Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; Mat 27:10 And gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me.*

It is as if God will curse ill gotten gains. That wealth which men get unjustly will do them no good because God will blast it. Perhaps it is this aching conscience that leads many rich men to do good works and become philanthropists?

Treasures of wickedness may also refer to honestly gained wealth that is put to a bad use. *Ecc 5:13 There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt. Ecc 5:14 But those riches perish by evil travail: and he begetteth a son, and there is nothing in his hand. Ecc 5:15 As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand.* God will also blast those riches such that there is nothing left for the next generation. He will cast away the substance of the wicked. *Pro 10:3 The LORD will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish: but he casteth away the substance of the wicked.*

The lesson here is be watchful how you get and how you use your wealth but also do not be burdened by it. Life must be put into a Christian perspective. *Mat 6:25 Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Mat 6:26 Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Mat 6:27 Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? Mat 6:28 And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: Mat 6:29 And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Mat 6:30 Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Mat 6:31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? Mat 6:32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. Mat 6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Mat 6:34 Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.* Yes we need some income to exist but God says that the income will follow if you put the Kingdom first. And if you are righteous your soul will not hunger.

David could draw the conclusion from a long life that: *Psa 37:25 I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. He is ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed.*

Do you see also in this Psalm how David saw another thing about the righteous man and his stewardship of his wealth? The consequences of his righteousness blessed the next generation, unlike the man in Ecclesiastes whose children had nothing in their hand. *Ecc 5:14 But those riches perish by evil travail: and he begetteth a son, and there is nothing in his hand.*

The subject of the stewardship is one that we do not often see dealt with by preachers. It is somehow assumed that we will be sensible and as long as we put a penny into the collection we are good stewards. And what minister who relies on his income from the congregation will want to upset them?

There is a real need for spiritual accountants and spiritual financial advisors that can assist us so that having passed through this life, what we have been loaned by God has made a real difference to the lives of others. If we do not audit our accounts, God certainly will.

Pro 10:4 He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand

Pro 10:4 He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich. He that gathereth in summer is a wise son: but he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame.

A slack hand is a hand that is not controlling. You try doing any DIY job with a slack hand and see what happens! Cutting, mending, drawing, aligning, gluing and sawing will all come to ruin. Diligence has a firm grip. I can say that from the personal experience of injuries received from doing DIY with a slack hand!

A slack hand is a hand that is not interested in the task, a hand that shouldn't be there. At work, at home, at play, we should always give of our best. *1Co 10:31 Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Eph 6:5 Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;*

A slack hand is a lazy hand. It is a hand that can hardly reach out for food. We shall come across the Slug Man later in Proverbs and here is our introduction to him. Laziness puts things off to another day even though it can be done today. Laziness sits on things rather than getting them moving. I encourage myself to be prompt in paying bills because I think of how I would like someone to respond with the same speed to me. Laziness is not a Christian virtue, it is a vice.

I am sure we can all give examples from our own lives to illustrate this Proverb but if we had persisted in laziness we would have come to nothing. One of the reasons in my mind, why the National lottery is so successful is because a majority of people are lazy. They want a get rich quick scheme that requires no effort.

God's general rule of life is that lazy people become poor people and that hard workers become rich people. The problem with Socialism is that it goes against God by trying to tilt the playing field in favour of the slackers and making the diligent pay for it. The hand of the diligent is taxed. Just notice how wealthy some of these social reformers are as they pretend to help the poor.

The Bible encourages charity to the genuine poor but never to the lazy. If a man doesn't work, don't let him eat. *2Th 3:10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.* The Socialist says if a man will not work give him an allowance.

When sin entered the World, God caused the World to become a more difficult place to live in. Farming would be a hard task fighting the weeds, thorns and thistles. The people who would succeed would be hard workers and the remainder would come to nothing.

I think that we can also find some advice here as to how to deal with financial requests.

1. We should first of all establish the circumstances of the individual.
2. We should ask how they are contributing to solving the problem.
3. We should ask who else is involved in solving the problem.
4. We should get a clear estimate of what is required and the costs.
5. We should get detailed information of how funds are managed.

I had a request from someone in Africa for help to improve his lot. I asked him what his plan was and where he wanted to be in one year's time. He said that he did not know. I told him he would be standing right where he was now. Lazy people like help, like your money, like your time but dislike doing anything themselves.

Beware, If we do not exercise care in our dealings we are slack handed stewards and we could also be encouraging other slack handlers.

Pro 10:6 Blessings are upon the head of the just

Pro 10:6 Blessings are upon the head of the just: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked. The memory of the just is blessed: but the name of the wicked shall rot.

We are reminded how the Jews made little frontlets for the eyes. *Deu 6:8 And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes.* I am not sure that this was meant to be a physical object but a conscious and unseen reminder of duty. In time they became physical objects and were bound around the head (phylacteries) like a crown to remind them of both the honour and duty of bearing God's word in the community. It is like a crown. *2Ti 4:8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.* We also see that blessings are associated with obedience. *Deu 28:2 And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God.*

Paying attention **first** to God's rules is the key to success. *Mat 6:33 But seek ye **first** the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.* Blessings are upon the head of the just.

How does violence cover the mouth of the wicked? Perhaps in the sense that violent men whatever they might say are not listened to. The words of their mouth are made of no value because of their evil deeds. Dictators may rant and rave but in the end their actions silence the value of their speech. What they do undermines and stops their speech.

The memory of the just is blessed: but the name of the wicked shall rot. The monuments to evil men do not last. I am sure over the past decades, we have all seen the fall of monuments made to evil men, Stalin, Hitler, Saddam Hussein, and Ceausescu. Where is there a monument to Hitler? Where are the monuments to the evil persons of our generation? They are nowhere because even sinful men do not in their heart of hearts like evil men. Their name rots or as the original word says they are eaten by the worms.

But the recollection of the just is blessed. I find this particularly true of the saints now with the Lord and I thank God for their remembrance and for the writings that they have bequeathed to me. And the scripture confirms God's concern even in our death. *Psa 116:15 Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.*

Blessings are upon the head of the just: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked. The memory of the just is blessed: but the name of the wicked shall rot.

The verses taken together show two things about the just and the wicked. The just are blessed in life and remembered with affection in death. The violent wicked have nothing to say of value in life and in death their corruption is made complete and they are forgotten.

I imagine that in eternity we may find that we cannot recall the wicked. They may be erased from our memory so that we can concentrate wholly on the good and blessed things of God's creation. Why would we want to know or remember the wicked? It may be the same grace that will sustain us when we find so many of those we knew in life not there in heaven. The wicked will see the righteous but it is not certain that the righteous will have the intrusion of the wicked. The wicked will spend eternity gazing upon that which they have rejected without any remission, even though they repent in Hell. It is a one way mirror.

Luk 16:26 And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot;

Pro 10:8 The wise in heart will receive commandments

Pro 10:8 The wise in heart will receive commandments: but a prating fool shall fall. He that walketh uprightly walketh surely: but he that perverteth his ways shall be known.

Again we have a “couplet” that contrasts the virtues of the wise and the failings of the stupid. Inward self-contained wisdom is contrasted with self-exposed folly.

There is a much wider social implication to these words because what is applied to the individual can be multiplied into the collective attitude of a nation. Perhaps this is nowhere better illustrated than in Daniel’s commentary on the Babylonian society of his day. *Dan 4:17 This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.*

Nebuchadnezzar was guilty of the crime of arrogance and became a prating fool. *Dan 4:30 The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?* He fell most surely in that same hour!

Then there was his successor Belshazzar. *Dan 5:1 Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand. Dan 5:2 Belshazzar, whiles he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein. Dan 5:3 Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them. Dan 5:4 They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone.* He took the priestly vessels and used them for a secular purpose. These vessels were symbols of Christ (typology) and therefore the crime was made even worse as a blasphemy against the Godhead. He too fell in that same night. The fool shall fall.

In both of these examples we have the power and authority of God taken over by man as Paul remarks: *Rom 1:25 Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.*

We may also observe that social decline follows the same path. We no longer live by God’s rules. When you look at the speeches of politicians on law and order the subject of morality is missing. God’s laws no longer apply. “We need to look beyond the headlines to build a consensus on how to deal with problems of crime,” Tony Blair has said. In other words, we will make crime and disorder a matter of the majority view and no wonder we do not walk surely.

If I were to look for a man in scripture who was wise and upright in his deeds it would be Joseph. *Gen 39:3 And his master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand. Gen 39:4 And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand.* Joseph walked uprightly and surely through life. It was not always an easy life but he walked the path that God had set him. *Gen*

50:20 But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.

Joseph could have written the hymn:

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness.
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly trust in Jesus' Name.

Refrain

On Christ the solid Rock I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand;
All other ground is sinking sand.

Christianity is not about walking on water, it is about walking on terra firma, Christ!

Pro 10:10 He that winketh with the eye causeth sorrow

Pro 10:10 He that winketh with the eye causeth sorrow: but a prating fool shall fall. Pro 10:11 The mouth of a righteous man is a well of life: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked. Pro 10:12 Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins. Pro 10:13 In the lips of him that hath understanding wisdom is found: but a rod is for the back of him that is void of understanding. Pro 10:14 Wise men lay up knowledge: but the mouth of the foolish is near destruction.

This is about people who do not talk straight talk. We see this so often when politicians are asked difficult questions. They don't give a straight answer. They talk around the issues or give tailored versions of the truth. For example:

Afghanistan.....3700 students have no building but study squatting on the ground inside baking hot tents. There are so many that they attend in three shifts – you see when politicians boast about 6 million children back at school what they don't tell you is that most are only going for two hours a day.

These verses are about communication. *Mat 5:37 But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.*

One version of the apocryphal story goes:

When George Washington, later President was about six years old he was made the wealthy master of a hatchet, of which like most little boys he was extremely fond. He went about chopping everything that came his way. One day as he wandered about the garden amusing himself by hacking his mother's pea sticks, he found a beautiful young English cherry tree of which his father was most proud. He tried the edge of his hatchet on the trunk of the tree and barked it so that it died. Sometime after this his father discovered what had happened to his favorite tree. He came into the house in great

anger and demanded to know who the mischievous person was who had cut away the bark. Nobody could tell him anything about it.

Just then George with his little hatchet came into the room. "George," said his father, "do you know who has killed my beautiful little cherry tree yonder in the garden? I would not have taken five guineas for it!". This was a hard question to answer and for a moment George was staggered by it but quickly recovering himself he cried: "I cannot tell a lie, father, you know I cannot tell a lie! I did cut it with my little hatchet." The anger died out of his father's face and taking the boy tenderly in his arms he said: "My son that you should not be afraid to tell the truth is more to me than a thousand trees! Yes - though they were blossomed with silver and had leaves of the purest gold!"

It has been estimated that 80% of our communication is non-verbal; it is our body language that does the talking. Some people talk more with their body (winks and innuendos) to avoid honest talking. There is though also a time for discretion when silence is golden and love covers (hides) a multitude of sins.

There are those who, in order to make themselves look righteous, will expose the faults and sins of others. *Joh 8:3 And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, Joh 8:4 They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Joh 8:5 Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? Joh 8:6 This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. Joh 8:7 So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.*

Now we all know that there are things in our lives we would rather remain secret and as we have forgiven ourselves of these things, we are encouraged to do the same to others. One of the great distinctives of love is that it forgives and forgets. This is perhaps why many marriages fail. What was forgiven in the first flush of love is now an obstacle to the relationship when love cools.

But this verse goes further than saying that love covers ALL sins. There is not one sin that you cannot forgive in another person if you have grounds to love them. Where better is this illustrated than in the Love of Christ for His people which passes knowledge? *Eph 3:19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.* Infinite love and infinite forgiveness.

Perhaps we can summarise the two truths here, plain speaking and love in the words of Paul:

Eph 4:14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

Pro 10:15 The rich man's wealth is his strong city

Pro 10:15 The rich man's wealth is his strong city: the destruction of the poor is their poverty. The labour of the righteous tendeth to life: the fruit of the wicked to sin. Pro 10:22 The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it. wealth is his strong city, and as an high wall in his own conceit.

A blessing (from to bless, Old English bleodsian or bletsian) originally meant "sprinkling with blood" during the pagan sacrifices, the Blóts. In Biblical context it means to enjoy the favour of God (Deut 28). The illustrations show that obedience and faithfulness led to a temporal prosperity in Israel and the converse was that disobedience led to a curse.

The blessing of the Lord may accompany our work as it did with Joseph but it was no safeguard or guarantee against the evil of man. The blessing makes rich, in both earthly and spiritual aspects of our life but we are warned about making riches an end in themselves. *1Ti 6:17 Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; 1Ti 6:18 That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; 1Ti 6:19 Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.*

Not all riches are a blessing and there are riches that add sorrow to life. *Ecc 5:13 There is a great evil which I have seen under the sun - wealth kept by the owner to be his downfall.* If getting rich makes us happy, then why don't countries as a whole get happier as they grow wealthier? *Luk 12:15 And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.*

Perhaps there is a lesson to learn here? We should examine the things in our lives that bring sorrow because they cannot be numbered with the blessings of the Lord, because those blessings add no sorrow. Many of the sorrows of life can be attributed to walking without Christ. Sorrow and unhappiness may be there because we are continuing to hold onto things which Christ does not want us to hold onto.

Asaph's unhappiness was due to his failure to enjoy the things that God had given him and to concentrate on the godless world around him. He was discontent yet failed to see how rich he really was (Psalm 73).

Happiness goes hand in hand with peace. *Rom 15:13 I pray that God, who gives hope, will bless you with complete happiness and peace because of your faith. And may the power of the Holy Spirit fill you with hope. CEV*

When God blesses something it will bring happiness and peace. Those things that do not bring happiness and peace should be discarded otherwise they will begin to drag us down and burden our lives. Those things can be wealth, friendships, jobs, hobbies, etc.

Just as we saw in Leviticus that there was an annual spring clean in the lives of the Israelites, we too should consider what is necessary and what is not necessary in our own lives and have a spiritual clean out. We should target those things that do not bring us happiness.

Pro 10:24 The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him

Pro 10:24 The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him: but the desire of the righteous shall be granted. Pro 10:25 As the whirlwind passeth, so is the wicked no more: but the righteous is an everlasting foundation.

There are two sorts of fear in the Bible. There is firstly, the fear associated with respect. There is the fear or respect of God and man. *Gen 20:11 And Abraham said, Because I thought, Surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife's sake. Lev 19:3 Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father, and keep my sabbaths: I am the LORD your God.*

I think that this fear is in short supply in our age. It is probably summed up by the popular phrase "Respect". In our age it is replaced by over familiarity both in homes and churches and the consequences are all too apparent.

Then there is the fear associated with wrong doing. *Gen 3:10 And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.* Jacob was afraid of his brother because he had cheated him of his birthright. *Gen 32:7 Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed: and he divided the people that was with him, and the flocks, and herds, and the camels, into two bands;* This fear carries with it guilt and it appears that humanity carries a conscience that can be highly sensitive to sin.

Wicked men fear the punishment of sin or retribution but they have not wisdom to improve their fears by making their escape and so the thing they feared comes upon them. Their present terrors are anticipations of their future torments. I have also noted how many people shut their minds to the possibilities of the future, old age and death. They cannot bring themselves to think about the possibilities of judgement. They have unrealistic expectations (for example, from the news recently people who retire abroad and the later difficulties they face).

It is as if many people have a sense of the torment and punishment to come. *Rev 14:9 And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, Rev 14:10 The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: Rev 14:11 And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. Rev 14:12 Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. Rev 14:13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.* It would seem that the original sin not only carried with it a sense of wrong doing but of the accompanying retribution associated with it,

otherwise why did Adam hide?

We should be encouraged by these verses that the wicked will be dealt with. *2Th 1:8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: 2Th 1:9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; 2Pe 2:9 The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:* There is justice in this world and God will mete it out in due course.

The builders of Babel, who were afraid of being scattered upon the face of the earth, saw the thing that they feared come upon them through and for their building of the tower. *Gen 11:4 And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.* So it sometimes is that the very thing which men fear comes upon them by the means which they take to prevent it. The Jews were afraid that if their people believed in Jesus of Nazareth, the Romans would come and seize their city and nation and they tried to persuade them to reject Him; for which rejection of Him, the thing they feared came upon them. *Joh 11:48 If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.*

The desire of the righteous shall be granted. What should these desires be? What a righteous man desires from right principles and with right views, what is for his own good and the glory of God, what he asks in faith and with submission to the divine will. His desires, the righteousness of Christ and to be found alone in that, living and dying, after holiness of heart and life, that he might be cleansed and kept from sin and preserved to the coming of Christ. What other desires have such value for this is what God's will is for us.

Pro 10:26 As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes

Pro 10:26 As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them that send him.

We notice that the warnings about laziness, slothfulness and sluggishness keep popping up in the book of Proverbs. Why not just say it once? I think that it recurs because it is an important issue and it is said again to put us in mind of its importance.

I think that we have here one of the things that God really dislikes. *Mat 25:26 His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: Rom 12:11 Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.*

The word "business" is not in the original text and the application is much wider than mere business. It must be a characteristic of the Christian nature that we are pro-active. Christians should not "sit" on things.

I remember many occasions in my life putting off doing things and that itself became a burden to me. Things like thanking an aunt for a Christmas present. I remember my father sitting me down at a table in late February, on a Saturday evening and making me write! Two months had passed and I had not acted. Then there was the time that I was too lazy to return a library book. I knew that the fine was mounting but still I was too lazy to act. The fine got to such a level that they could have bought a new book. I eventually plucked up courage and took it back 2 years later! I also remember putting off doing homework during the school holiday and finally having to get up at 5 o'clock on the morning that we went back to school to complete the assignment.

I have learned to hate laziness. Its not a godly trait. I hate it when people fail to respond to deadlines in business and I make a point of responding quickly to set an example and because its what I expect. Laziness sets my teeth on edge and irritates me. I hope that it irritates you because that means you have a Christian attitude to it.

There are many problems in Africa. Next to corruption, I would say that laziness is the sin of Africa. When we look at poverty and deprivation in this world it is often blamed on poor harvests and bad weather. I can though point to countries that have poor harvest and bad weather but are not reduced to starvation because of it. There are people who can make a living out of the desert.

One of the root causes of poverty is laziness. *Pro 6:10 Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man. AV Pro 6:10 Sleep a little. Doze a little. Fold your hands and twiddle your thumbs. Suddenly, everything is gone, as though it had been taken by an armed robber. CEV*

There is a Biblical work ethic and we should be careful about encouraging dependency cultures among lazy people. If people don't work the Bible says they don't deserve to eat. *2Th 3:10 We also gave you the rule that if you don't work, you don't eat. CEV.*

Pro 10:27 If you respect the LORD, you will live longer

Pro 10:27 If you respect the LORD, you will live longer; if you keep doing wrong, your life will be cut short.

Mal 1:6 A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name? Mal 1:7 Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the LORD is contemptible. Mal 1:8 And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts. Mal 1:9 And now, I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious unto us: this hath been by your means: will he regard your persons? saith the LORD of hosts. Mal 1:10 Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for nought? neither do ye kindle fire on mine altar for nought. I have no pleasure in you, saith the LORD of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand. Mal 1:11 For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure

offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the LORD of hosts. Mal 1:12 But ye have profaned it, in that ye say, The table of the LORD is polluted; and the fruit thereof, even his meat, is contemptible. Mal 1:13 Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the LORD of hosts; and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand? saith the LORD. Mal 1:14 But cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I am a great King, saith the LORD of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen.

These verses can explain much about the ailments that befall contemporary Christians. Let us take for example Uzziah (2 Chron 26) of whom it is said; *“he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD”*. 2 Ch 26:5 *He sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God: and as long as he sought the LORD, God made him to prosper.* So far so good, but he was marvellously helped, till he was strong. But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction.

He had lost his respect for and I might say his need for the Lord. He had become strong in himself and lost that simple reliance upon God that characterised his early days. Prosperity is a great deceiver because by it men lose reason and also their lives. *Luk 12:15 And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. Luk 12:16 And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: Luk 12:17 And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? Luk 12:18 And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. Luk 12:19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. Luk 12:20 But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? Luk 12:21 So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.* They think that they have a strong castle but it is only sand before the tempest of God.

There are times when God cuts the wicked short. You might say, well I do not see it in my day. But here God is talking to us believers. Why do we always tend to look at wickedness in unbelievers and not ourselves? Believers can do wrong as did Uzzah and they suffer the result. *1Co 11:30 For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.* Death and illness were sent to Corinth for their lack of respect to God. I believe that this still holds true. Unfortunately we tend to go to doctors rather than God for the cure.

In what way did the Corinthians “eat and drink” unworthily of the Lord’s body and blood? There are a number of ways and they are because of being;

- **Factious:** *1Co 1:12 Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.*
- **Proud:** *1Co 4:18 Now some are puffed up*
- **Fornicators:** *1Co 5:1 It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you*
- **Litigious:** *1Co 6:1 Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust,*

- **Libertine:** *1Co 8:9 But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.*
- **Disorderly:** *1Co 11:3 But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.*
- **Selfish:** *1Co 14:26 Let all things be done unto edifying.*

As we have observed before, when people who KNOW God give up God, God gives them up to their own evil ways. *Rom 1:21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.*

The consequences for the individual, exposes them to disease of all kinds and this as we know, with life threatening outcomes. The debate should not be whether HIV/AIDS is a disease of hetero or homosexual's, but whether it is a disease of profligate individuals who have rejected God's way of living? There are also we acknowledge, innocent victims of this but the root is still the disrespect of the Lord.

The cure of many life-threatening ills is to bring God to the front of our minds and not relegate him to the Sunday slot or the desperation slot.

Pro 10:28 The hope of the *righteous shall be gladness*

Pro 10:28 The hope of the righteous shall be gladness: but the expectation of the wicked shall perish.

Another Proverb also shows us that the wicked lose their expectations. *Pro 11:7 When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish: and the hope of unjust men perisheth.*

Here is an end to the idea perpetrated by the Roman Catholic Church that you can do something for a dead sinner. They hold "requiem masses" and its theme is a prayer for the salvation of the souls of the departed and they hope to influence Gods decisions after death. It says here that once dead there are no expectations at all, nothing to look forward to, only an eternity of suffering. *Pro 11:23 The desire of the righteous is only good: but the expectation of the wicked is wrath.*

I do not know how it is that so many people can live their lives in such falsehood and defiance of the truth of God. I must put it down to the blinding effects of sin. Death and its consequences are never faced up to but it is the one absolutely certain thing in life. We all die, we all have an appointment with death. *Heb 9:27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.*

With the prospect of meeting God a looming reality it should provoke any and every man to prepare himself for that uncertain hour. *Luk 12:40 Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.*

Tragedy comes suddenly and often in the midst of joy (like the devastated couple, who sadly lost their children to Carbon Monoxide poisoning while on holiday). I was watching a programme on the unsinkable Titanic. On that fateful evening, people put their fine clothes on and went to dinner as

normal all anticipating their arrival in America and their lives before them. Dressed in their fine clothes they perished that same hour the Iceberg ripped the side of the boat out.

One of most compelling tales of self-sacrifice is that of the *Titanic's* band. They weren't part of the ship's crew (although they nominally signed ship's orders they were carried as passengers) and they weren't needed to keep the power running or to load the lifeboats, likely no one would have protested if they had sought places in lifeboats. Instead, of their own volition they stayed with the ship until the very end steadfastly playing light, airy music to help keep passengers calm while the available lifeboats were loaded. The last piece played by the *Titanic's* musicians was "Nearer My God to Thee."

There in my Father's home, safe and at rest,
There in my Saviour's love, perfectly blest;
Age after age to be, nearer my God to Thee

How near those people were to God we do not know.

The word used for expectation means a "cord" in the Hebrew and is used of the red cord that Rahab hung from her house on the walls of Jericho. *Jos 2:18 Behold, when we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which thou didst let us down by: and thou shalt bring thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father's household, home unto thee.* The expectations of the wicked are a thread to which they cling but it offers them no support.

Now contrast the expectation of the wicked with the hope or joy of the righteous. Lazarus may have had a miserable life at the gates of the rich man but what a welcome to eternity! *Luk 16:22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;*

This life is incredibly short a mere flash. *Job 7:6 My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle,* With this in mind keep looking to the joy set before us. *Heb 12:2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Pro 10:31 Honest people speak sensibly

Pro 10:31 Honest people speak sensibly, but deceitful liars will be silenced. If you obey the Lord, you will always know the right thing to say. But no one will trust you if you tell lies.

John 18:38 Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And received no answer. The Greek word for truth is "aletheia". Lethe is one of the five rivers of Hades. Drinking from the river Lethe ("forgetfulness" or "oblivion") caused complete forgetfulness. The dead would drink the waters of Lethe to forget their earthly existence. Some ancient Greeks also believed that souls were made to drink from the river before being reincarnated so they would not remember their past lives. A-letheia ('a' privative) is that which is not forgotten, the truth that first appears when something is seen or revealed. It is to take out of hiding and to uncover. Lies are those things which are hidden.

Jesus uncovers the truth for us and it frees us. *Joh 8:32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth*

shall make you free. Were it not for Him we would remain eternally lost going to Hell in ignorance.

Jesus was always truthful in His answers to men and women. Take the woman at the well of Sychar. *Joh 4:5 Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Joh 4:6 Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour. Joh 4:7 There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. Joh 4:8 (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.) Joh 4:9 Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Joh 4:10 Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.*

Jesus speaks the truth openly without fear of touching sensitive subjects. The same is true of the rich ruler. *Luk 18:18 And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?*

Jesus does not beat about the bush. He was not afraid to offend his host at the expense of truth. *Luk 11:37 And as he spake, a certain Pharisee besought him to dine with him: and he went in, and sat down to meat.* We live in an age of political correctness and fear. We have to be sensitive to the extent that we can no longer criticise even where those we criticise are wrong. Jesus would find Himself in trouble today.

The Bible says: *Pro 17:17 A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.* You have no friend in those who will not be honest with you and you have no friend in those who tell you lies. If you accept those people as your friends it will show that you have no regard for truth. *Pro 16:8 Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues without right.*

True Friendship is built upon trust but as it says here no one will trust you if you tell lies. Have you ever spent time examining the relationships that you have with people in the light of how truthful or honest people are with you? Are those people you call friends interested in your self-improvement or are they just idle companions?

If you obey the Lord, you will always know the right thing to say. *Mar 13:11 But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.*

The reason that we will be supported is that Jesus is our greatest friend. As the hymn writer Joseph Scriven noted:

What a friend we have in Jesus,
all our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
everything to God in prayer!

Pro 11:1 A false balance is abomination to the LORD

Pro 11:1 A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight. The CEV puts it thus: The LORD hates anyone who cheats, but he likes everyone who is honest.

Cheating has become a way of life for many people. Cheating is when a person misleads, deceives or acts dishonestly on purpose. We may cheat to get an unfair advantage over someone (we often call it an “edge”) and in the PC gaming world special features that enable you to win are called “cheats” and there is a website called *cheatplaza*.

Cheating is now used to describe husbands and wives who have secret relationships with other people. The attitude of show host Chris Tarrant is probably typical: *“I hate to break this to you but I'm not the first and I won't be the last,” he says. ‘I mean, I didn't break the law. Yes, I was a bad boy and yes I went out with another woman. But what is this hysteria? ‘Of course I ask myself: “What was I doing?” I was playing away, you know, boys do. There will be reasons on both sides why I felt the need to do that. I couldn't even analyse them myself yet”.*

This 60 year-old man describes himself as a “boy”, relegating the whole affair to a childish prank and a game (playing away) and justifies it on the grounds that it is regular boy behaviour. He is sending a clear message that cheating is OK. Geoffrey Archer ended up in prison for perjury when he tried to bluff out his affair and sue the Daily Star for libel. If you want more from America then go to the “The Republican Wife-Cheating Hall of Fame” website.

Cheating in sport and match fixing are regularly in the news as are the occasions when athletes are caught taking performance enhancing drugs. Ben Johnson was voted the worst sporting cheat of all time for the 1998 drugs scandal that saw him stripped of his Olympic gold medal. A survey showed the country's disgust for the Canadian's shameless flouting of the rules. They voted it worse even than other notorious cheaters such as Tonya Harding's shocking attack on arch-rival Nancy Kerrigan in the 1994 Winter Olympics, and Maradona's 'Hand of God'.

According to a Financial Times report MBA students are the biggest cheats of all graduate students with 56 per cent admitting to misdemeanours such as using crib notes in exams, plagiarism and downloading essays from the web. This doesn't bode well for business, if they start as cheats, they can only get worse.

What is at the root of cheating? Selfish dishonesty which illustrates the fact that a person does not love their neighbour as themselves, rather they despise their neighbour and will do whatever they can to take advantage of them. On December 30th 2006 we saw the death of one of the world's biggest cheats Saddam Hussein. Human Rights Watch estimates that as many as 290,000 people were killed under the rule of Saddam Hussein with as many as 500,000 killed in the Iraq/Iran war (1980 – 1988).

God hates cheats, and when God hates it results in severe punishments, if not in this life definitely in the world to come.

Pro 11:2 When pride cometh, then cometh shame

Pro 11:2 When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom.

In English the term "pride" refers to a sense of self-respect, a refusal to be humiliated as well as a joy in one's accomplishments. We can make a distinction between pride, the quality of valuing performance and vain glory, unreasonable and inordinate self-esteem. The word here in the original refers to the pride of arrogance and presumption. It is looking at an attitude problem of someone thinking more of them self than they are worth.

Uzziah is an example that kings have their place and limitations. *2Ch 26:16 But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction.* Being royal does not mean being above law. Nebuchadnezzar is another example.

This very similar to *Pro 16:18: "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.* It is interesting that sexual deviants have chosen the term "Pride" to describe their activities...Gay Pride. They are on the path to destruction!

Isa 66:2 For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.

Pro 11:5 The righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way

Pro 11:5 The righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way: but the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness. Pro 11:6 The righteousness of the upright shall deliver them: but transgressors shall be taken in their own naughtiness. Pro 11:7 When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish: and the hope of unjust men perisheth.

Purgatory is a doctrine in the Roman Catholic Church which posits that those who die in a state of grace undergo purification in order to achieve the holiness necessary to enter heaven. This purification of the elect, while traditionally seen a fiery punishment for sins is declared to be entirely different from the punishment of the damned in hell. The Catholic doctrine holds that the souls in purgatory undergo temporal punishment due to venial sins or as satisfaction due to their transgressions and that they can be aided by the prayer and sufferings of the faithful and the Sacrifice of the Mass. Hence central to the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory is prayer for the dead.

Never in the Bible are we told to afflict ourselves for the dead. *Deu 14:1 Ye are the children of the LORD your God: ye shall not cut yourselves, nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead.* Never are we encouraged to pray for the dead. We are responsible for our own sin. *Deu 24:16 every man shall be put to death for his own sin.*

The teaching on Purgatory (purging) is unknown in the Old and New Testaments. To the contrary our text here proves that there is no second chance. There is no evidence that there are three places to go after death, to Heaven, hell and purgatory. The story of Lazarus clearly shows 2 places and those 2 places are separated by an eternal gulf. *Luk 16:26 And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed.*

Christ made not even so much as a passing allusion to purgatory. Instead He said: *Joh 5:24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.*

The apostle John teaches the same: *1Jn 1:7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. 1Jn 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* Hence our sins, all of them, are forgiven through the sacrifice of Christ and none are left to be purged away by human merit. And again: *Rev 14:13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.*

1Ti 2:5 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Eph 2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Eph 2:9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

And as for heaven, we are there already. *Eph 2:6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*

Pro 11:10 When it goeth well with the righteous, the city rejoiceth

Pro 11:10 When it goeth well with the righteous, the city rejoiceth: and when the wicked perish, there is shouting. Pro 11:11 By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted: but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked.

The scripture also notes that: *Pro 14:34 Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.* This is another of God's laws at work in the world that says that morality will affect the outcome for a nation. Edmund Burke noted (1729 - 1797) "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing".

There can be no doubt that over the past decades that there has been a decline in public standards and morality (see charts below). The Government occasionally fudges the issue by alterations to the criminal justice act to remove certain offences but the facts speak for themselves, it was a less crime ridden society in the early part of the 20th century than it is today. Despite the greater hardships people did not turn to crime to solve their problems.

The issue in January 2007 on prison overcrowding has not scratched the fundamental issue of why are people committing crimes? Giving people community service orders is unnecessary in a community where people respect law. We may well trace the problem back to the family unit and

the fact that over the last 40 years governments have eroded the rights of parents in favour of child rights. Parents who discipline their child are punished for it. The failure of the State to punish early means that it has the problem of punishing later. We also saw this week a judge release a paedophile on the pretext that prisons were too full.

Further undermining of the Biblical family came recently with the new adoption laws which place children in same sex relationships (see note below), further erosion of righteousness. It was for this reason that God visited Sodom. In Genesis, Abraham intercedes for the City of Sodom, it would not be destroyed with the righteous so God got the righteous out before He did it. *Gen 18:20 And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; Gen 18:21 I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know. Gen 18:22 And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the LORD. Gen 18:23 And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Gen 18:24 Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? Gen 18:25 That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? Gen 18:26 And the LORD said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes.*

Dan 4:17 This punishment is given at the command of the holy angels. It will show to all who live that God Most High controls all kingdoms and chooses for their rulers persons of humble birth CEV. We should remind ourselves that God may be longsuffering but He is always just and He will remove the wicked. Should we not also add our voices to those of the saints that God will bring His justice to bear? *Rev 6:9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: Should we not pray for God to remove the wicked and evils men from society?*

Are we praying enough for God to give us rulers that will give us peaceful lives? *1Ti 2:1 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; 1Ti 2:2 For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.*

I have two comforts. One that the horsemen of the Apocalypse are riding the earth ready with their judgements and secondly that evil rulers do not live forever and death will remove them at some stage.

Notes

Christian magistrate resigns over gay adoption.

Andrew McClintock stepped down after his request to not have to deal with cases involving gay parents were dismissed.

27th November 2006 By Marc Shoffman.

A Christian judge is taking legal action against the UK Government after claiming he had to resign from his role because he was against ruling on adoption cases which would have placed children in the care of same sex couples.

Andrew McClintock stepped down after his request to not have to deal with cases involving gay parents was dismissed.

He has been a family panel judge for 15 years in Yorkshire and claims it is against his "conscience" to promote gay adoption, but his bosses warned that he could not pick and choose cases.

The 62-year-old told the Sunday Telegraph: "I felt pushed into a corner, I wanted to be sure that I was not risking sending children into same-sex households. As that could not be guaranteed, I felt that I must resign rather than act against my conscience, but I was disappointed that no effort was made to accommodate my Christian beliefs."

His case will be taken against the Department for Constitutional Affairs, arguing that religious rights must be protected in social employment and public services.

It comes as the Sexual Orientation Regulations which guarantee equality in the provision of goods and services are due next April, Andrea Minichiello Williams, a public policy officer for the Lawyers' Christian Fellowship, told the paper, "If the Government's proposed Sexual Orientation Regulations come into force, Mr. McClintock will be joined by thousands of other law-abiding and upstanding citizens forced out of their jobs because their Christian faith and belief in the importance of heterosexual marriage is no longer tolerated by our Government."

The Times January 25, 2007

A magistrate who says that he was forced to resign because he did not feel able to place children in care with same-sex couples said yesterday that the children were being used as guinea-pigs in a social experiment.

Andrew McClintock, 62, a member of the Christian People's Alliance council, has served as a magistrate in the family courts in Sheffield for 15 years, ruling on whether children in troubled families needed to be placed in care.

But he has argued that the new civil partnership law could mean him sanctioning the removal of a child from its natural family to be placed in the care of a gay couple. Mr. McClintock, a father of four, resigned from his position because he said that this would contravene both his personal religious beliefs and his duty as a magistrate to put the child's welfare first.

He is taking action against the Department for Constitutional Affairs, which runs the country's magistrates' courts, under the Employment Equality Regulations 2003, arguing that he is being discriminated against on religious grounds. He wants reinstatement. Protesters handing out leaflets on the first of what is expected to be a three-day employment tribunal supported Mr McClintock.

He told the tribunal in Sheffield that children assigned to same-sex couples risked being teased in the playground about having two daddies or mummies. He said: "It is incompatible with the welfare of the child, who is becoming a guinea-pig in a social science experiment."

He is claiming that his dignity had been violated after being told that he must sit on such cases despite his conviction that children should be brought up by heterosexual couples. There were precedents for his position of conscience and he should be accommodated, he argued.

POSTSCRIPT 2014: Christian Magistrate Andrew McClintock has lost his case to have his freedom of conscience recognized when practicing as a Justice of the Peace. The judgment of the Employment Appeal Tribunal was handed down by Mr. Justice Elias on 31st October 2007.

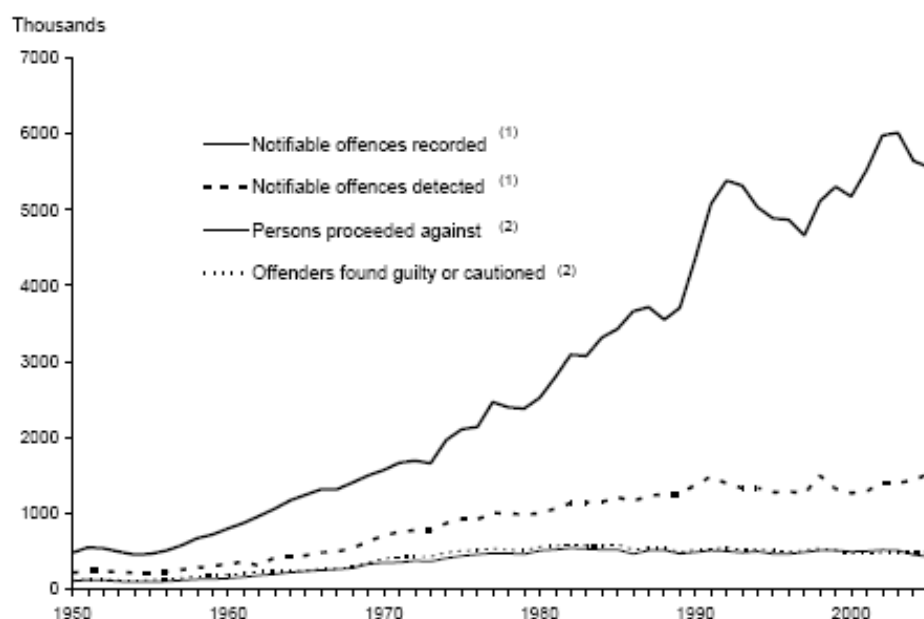
The judicial oath, which Mr. McClintock undertook, states that he must, "...do right to all manner of People, after the laws and usage of this realm, without fear or favour, affection or ill-will." It was Andrew McClintock's belief that to place a child into a same-sex home would not be 'doing right' to them. Andrew McClintock was seeking to uphold his judicial duty. When he took the Judicial Oath he made a promise before God that he would 'do right' by all people. The question that we now have to ask is "what can a person do when 'doing right' appears in conflict with the law of the land?"

To read the adjudication go to:

<http://www.christianconcern.com/our-concerns/adoption/christian-magistrate-loses-freedom-conscience-case>

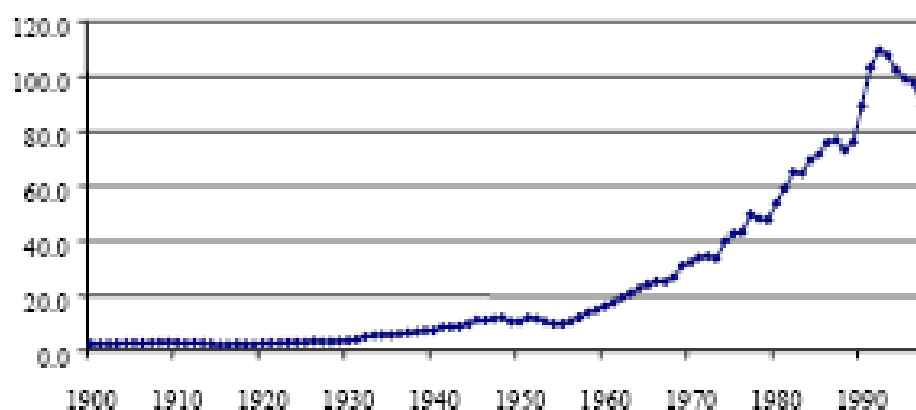
CHARTS

Figure 1.2 Recorded crime, persons proceeded against and 'known' offenders, 1950-2005

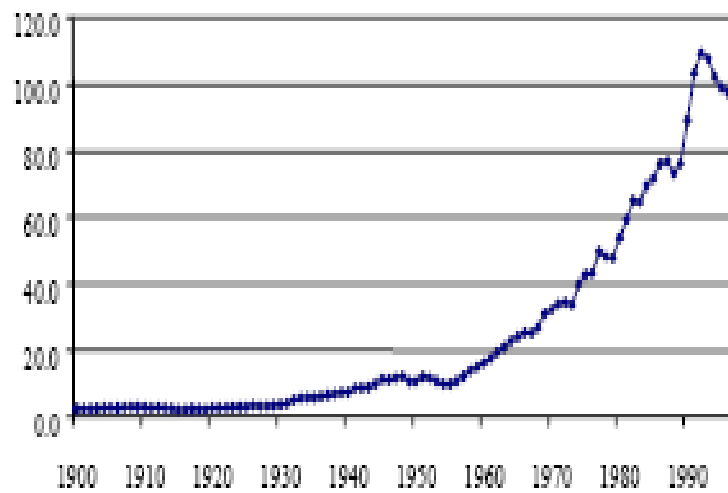


- (1) From 1998 the figures are for financial years. The recorded crime series was affected by new counting rules from 1998 onwards and by the NCRS from 2001/02 onwards (see para 1.1)
- (2) Indictable offences with allowance for under-recording where appropriate.

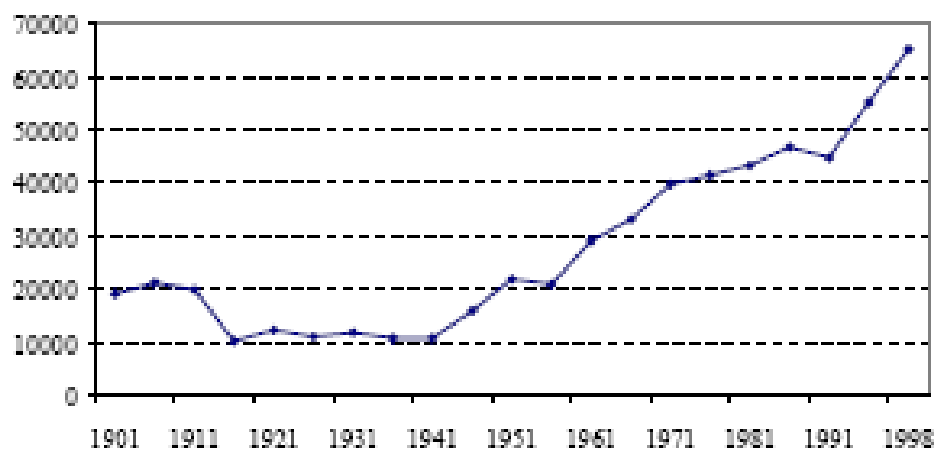
Indictable Offences Known to the Police (per thousand of population) in England & Wales 1900-1997.



**Indictable Offences Known to the Police
(per thousand of population) in England &
Wales 1900-1997.**



Prison Population in England & Wales: 1901-98



Pro 11:12 He that is void of wisdom despiseth his neighbour

Pro 11:12 He that is void of wisdom despiseth his neighbour: but a man of understanding holdeth his peace. A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.

We must ask ourselves who or what is a neighbour? Is it just the persons living next door? A lawyer puzzled by this asked Jesus “who is my neighbour”? And to explain, Jesus told them a story.

Luk 10:29 But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour? Luk 10:30 And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Luk 10:31 And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Luk 10:32 And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. Luk 10:33 But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, Luk 10:34 And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. Luk 10:35 And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Luk 10:36 Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? Luk 10:37 And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

We never found out who the injured traveler was whether he was a Greek, a Roman, a murderer or a merchant? It didn't seem to bother the Samaritan one bit because he makes no enquiry. I met a Doctor on my latest visit to Africa and I asked him why he became a Doctor. He told me that when he was a very young boy of 5 years old he was recovering from an illness in hospital. Every morning the house surgeon came along and took the little boy by his hand and walked with him as he visited his other patients. The little boy looked up to this man as a role model and eventually became a doctor himself.

What was interesting though was that he saw something of the great care and concern that his mentor showed to the patients. He said to me that when it came to patient care he did not discriminate between them or whatever they had done or were. They were all treated with the same excellence. I think that he knew something about neighbourliness.

Now the story of the Good Samaritan informs us that everyone is a neighbour so every neighbour deserves mercy. Yes even the bad ones and that is a very hard thing to ask of us. But it helps to remember that God will deal with them, not you. *Rom 12:17 Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. Rom 12:18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Rom 12:19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Rom 12:20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Rom 12:21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*

“None but the man “void of wisdom” will show contempt for those about him. The wise man if he cannot admire or praise will at least know how to be silent. The man who comes to us with tales about others will reveal our secrets also. A foolish man is generally abundant in his censures, he dwells on the defects of his neighbor and is sure to bring them into the most prominent view. But a man of understanding - a prudent, sensible man, hides those defects wherever he can and puts the most charitable construction on those that he cannot conceal.” (Clarke’s commentary)

Silence is a mark of a true friendship and a preservative of it. It is characterized by:

1. **Wisdom:** *A man of understanding*, that has rule over his own spirit, if he is provoked, he *holds his peace*.
2. **Sincerity:** *He that is of a faithful spirit* that is true, not only to his own promise, but to the interest of his friend, *conceals every matter* which, if divulged, may turn to the prejudice of his neighbour. Love covers a multitude of sins

Much of what passes for entertainment today is based upon ridiculing, exposing, putting down and scandalising of individuals. We are becoming a society that takes pleasure in other people’s faults and failures. There was a time when men said “there but for the grace of God go I” This is no longer true.

Pro 11:15 Its a dangerous thing to guarantee payment for someone's debts

Pro 11:15 Its a dangerous thing to guarantee payment for someone's debts. Don't do it! CEV

When dealing with debts we should always find out why and how people got into debt? Debt can come about from a number of reasons:

- Reckless spending
- Gambling
- Greed
- Poor business decisions
- Ill health
- War
- Famine and failed harvest
- Theft and robbery
- Death

Some of the causes of debt are beyond our control so there may be times when we call on others to help us. God made rules about lending however to stop men being greedy and exploiting those who had fallen on bad times. *Deu 24:10 When thou dost lend thy brother any thing, thou shalt not go into his house to fetch his pledge*. This type of loan would be called a “secured loan” where an asset is pledged as collateral. It is the sort of lending associated with Pawn shops.

One of the typical images of the Jew is as a money lender but God had told them that they were not to extract large returns on their loans to their **brothers**. *Exo 22:25 If thou lend money to any of my*

people that is poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as an usurer, neither shalt thou lay upon him usury.

Among Jews the loans were interest free so that if I borrowed £10, I would only pay £10 back not £10 plus interest. So how did the Jews make money? They charged interest to those who were outside of the faith, the unbelievers. *Deu 23:20 Unto a stranger thou mayest lend upon usury; but unto thy brother thou shalt not lend upon usury* It is this that has probably given them a bad reputation.

There is no doubt that money can do a lot of good but that the love for it is at the root of evil. *1Ti 6:10 For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*

Our Proverb is not saying that we should not lend to people, it is saying that there are some people that we should not lend to. *Pro 11:15 He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it:*

If we do not know the person who is asking for money or if the reasons that the person wants the money are due to bad business decisions then the chances of you getting your money back are near to zero. Always try and find out how the person got into debt.

In 1966 the first credit cardholders had a credit limit of £100 which they could spend with 30,000 retailers across the UK. The limit may sound small but is roughly equivalent to the average credit limit for a new customer today. In 1966 however customers had to repay their balance at the end of each month. In 2006 the average British adult had a total of £4,109 in borrowing spread across credit cards, motor and retail finance deals, overdrafts and unsecured personal loans.

Note. The total has grown by 52% over the past five years. The UK gets itself £1m deeper into debt every four minutes. Britain's household debt mountain has reached a new peak, with UK homes now owing an average of £15,385 to credit card firms, banks and other lenders, according to the TUC. Telegraph 2019.

Take some good advice from God. *Rom 13:8 Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.*

Pro 11:16 A gracious woman retaineth honour; and the violent retain riches

I don't know whether it is part of the territory of being a grumpy old man but I see modern women as considerably lacking in grace. Grace is a divine attribute. *Exo 22:27 For that is his covering only, it is his raiment for his skin: wherein shall he sleep? and it shall come to pass, when he crieth unto me, that I will hear; for I am gracious.* Grace here was shown by concern for the poor, his physical well being, his warmth, his rest. It annoyed God when people failed to show this same divine quality.

It is probably a very subjective issue but I would suggest that graciousness is defined as:

1. Characterised by kindness and warm courtesy.
2. Characterised by tact and propriety: responding to insults with gracious humor.
3. Of a merciful or compassionate nature.
4. Characterised by charm or beauty.
5. Characterised by elegance and good taste: gracious living.

There are a growing number of foul mouthed, filthy living women that are becoming role models for the upcoming generation. There are few if any women in the public eye that I could point to as a role model. Can you think of any?

There are of course many good role models in the Bible. Ruth, Esther, Abigail, Mary, Dorcas etc. Women who in adversity never compromised their faith, and that is what this verse is about. Don't sell your honour or more properly don't sell out your glory, for that is the meaning of the word (Heb *cavod* כבוד). *Exo 24:16 And the glory of the LORD abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud.*

In Corinthians a woman's hair is described as her glory. So what we are dealing with here is the distinctive of a woman, what makes a woman a woman. *1Co 11:15 But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering.*

What qualities would you ascribe to a Christian woman? I would say that women are more susceptible than men to the influences of the "shopping gene" which has spawned a huge magazine/lifestyle market. You go into Bentalls or any Department store and you will see that there is a much larger floor area for women's fashion than men's. Now I am not saying that women should neglect their outward appearance but they should not forget what really counts. *1Pe 3:4 But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.*

If ever there was a time when we needed to reestablish Biblical feminine values it is now. It should be a matter of pride that we do so. As the verse says if a strong man hangs on to his riches it is an example of how you should hang onto your riches.

Pro 11:17 Kindness is rewarded - but if you are cruel, you hurt yourself.

Pro 11:17 Kindness is rewarded - but if you are cruel, you hurt yourself. Pro 11:18 Meanness gets you nowhere, but goodness is rewarded. CEV Pro 11:17 The merciful man doeth good to his own soul: but he that is cruel troubleth his own flesh. The wicked worketh a deceitful work: but to him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward. AV

Here is another natural law built into the fabric of life. Cruelty does not go unrewarded. What is cruelty? Cruelty is indifference to suffering and even positive pleasure in inflicting it, feelings of extreme heartlessness. Can you give some examples of cruelty? Can you name some cruel people?

In the Bible the execution of Jesus was particularly cruel, in fact the Romans made death a slow and very painful process almost a foretaste of hell itself. *Mar 15:12 Then Pilate asked the crowd, "What*

do you want me to do with this man you say is the king of the Jews?" Mar 15:13 They yelled, "Nail him to a cross!" Joh 19:1 Pilate gave orders for Jesus to be beaten with a whip. Joh 19:2 The soldiers made a crown out of thorn branches and put it on Jesus. Then they put a purple robe on him. Joh 19:3 They came up to him and said, "Hey, you king of the Jews!" They also hit him with their fists.

What do you think were the aspects of cruelty associated with Jesus death? (Whipping, mocking, carrying the cross, nailing, crown of thorns, thirsting....). What will God do to those who mock the beloved son and to those who still would crucify Him?

Then there is the cruelty that springs from dislike and that would punish the sufferer even more. *1Sa 1:6 And her adversary also provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the LORD had shut up her womb. 1Sa 1:7 And as he did so year by year, when she went up to the house of the LORD, so she provoked her; therefore she wept, and did not eat.* Sarah too had a cruel streak but God turned it into a blessing for her. *Gen 21:9 And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking. Gen 21:10 Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac.*

War releases great cruelty. *Isa 13:9 Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. Isa 13:10 For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. Isa 13:11 And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.*

We only have to look in the papers to see the outcome of man's inhumanity. Where do wars come from? *Jas 4:1 From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?* The Proverb sews two thoughts together in these verses. Meanness and cruelty appear to go together and kindness and goodness go together.

We are not told what causes someone to become a cruel person. What do you think causes people to become cruel? I think that there is the likelihood that people who are mean, people who live for themselves, are less likely to be concerned for the well being of other people. *Pro 12:10 A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.*

It is of note that 200 years after the abolition of slavery, the man who led the abolition William Wilberforce was also the founder of the RSPCA. He was an example of goodness overcoming cruelty.

Postscript 2014. I am not sure that Wilberforce would be so pleased to associate with what the RSPCA has become.

"The RSPCA have today issued a grovelling apology for killing an elderly cat against its family's wishes and then making a bungled attempt to prosecute them."

Richard Byrnes and his wife Samantha suffered two years of trauma after an RSPCA inspector seized their cat, 16-year-old Claude, in May 2013, claiming that he was too

thin and had matted fur. After 24 hours of agonising negotiations Claude was put to sleep by a local vet against the wishes of Mr. and Mrs. Byrnes - who were threatened with prison and fines if they refused to sign the release form.

Pro 11:22 A beautiful woman who acts foolishly is like a gold ring on the snout of a pig.

Nose rings were common jewellery among the Asian people and the text refers to this. Pigs were also common but among the Jews they were unclean animals. The prodigal son who squandered his father's money sank to the very depths of despair illustrated by his living with the pigs. *Luk 15:15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.* Pigs were kept as live cleaning machines.

Pigs can also be very destructive and can make a mess of land by rooting around in it. To stop pigs doing this people put rings in their noses. Of course you wouldn't put an expensive gold ring in a pig's nose rather an iron ring. A gold ring would be totally out of place and a waste of money.



Now the Proverb is making an allusion that a beautiful Woman is like a Gold ring. She is a precious commodity and a rarity much sought after by men. I have no doubt that king Xerxes wife Vashti was very beautiful but she was also indiscrete and in her behaviour set a precedent for other women to be disobedient. *Est 1:11 To bring Vashti the queen before the king with the crown royal, to shew the people and the princes her beauty: for she was fair to look on. Est 1:15 What shall we do unto the queen Vashti according to law, because she hath not performed the commandment of the king Ahasuerus by the chamberlains? Est 1:16 And Memucan answered before the king and the princes, Vashti the queen hath not done wrong to the king only, but also to all the princes, and to all the people that are in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus. Est 1:17 For this deed of the queen shall come abroad unto all women, so that they shall despise their husbands in their eyes, when it shall be reported, The king Ahasuerus commanded Vashti the queen to be brought in before him, but she came not. Est 1:18 Likewise shall the ladies of Persia and Media say this day unto all the king's princes, which have heard of the deed of the queen. Thus shall there arise too much contempt and wrath.*

If the king's wife does it why can't we? We might use the saying that "she rubbed the king's nose in the dirt" but she brought herself down in the process.

For all her beauty was as nothing and it was no ornament to the king. It was as out of place as a gold ring in a pig's nose.

If beauty is to be of any value it should carry with it dignity. If you wished to display a gold ring to its best effect you would place it on a velvet cloth or the like. Precious objects require a suitable background to bring out their qualities. You would not put a gold ring on a pig's nose.

We have observed in our culture today that there are beautiful women who bring themselves down by the way they behave. They are alright until they open their mouths. We have a phrase that describes them as “potty” mouths. We also describe such women as dirt which is in keeping with the idea of a gold ring in a pig’s nose scraping around in filth.

Our times that we live in are times where we want to be beautiful. The average woman spends an average of £482.00 per year on makeup contributing to a £1billion business. We can change our faces like we change a shirt but there is very little help given on changing the inside. Being foolish and indiscrete is becoming a sought after commodity rather than something to be disapproved of.

Women of the world will not listen to us but we must see ourselves not through the eyes of men but through the eyes of God. The words we read today are God’s words written to warn and to encourage. At the end of life we will have to face His verdict on what we were to Him not just what we were to others. The book of Proverbs closes with a word to women. A word that examines what she built in life because that will be her epitaph, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay and stubble.

Pro 31:31 Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates.

Pro 11:24 There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth

Pro 11:24 There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. Pro 11:25 The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself. Pro 11:26 He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him: but blessing shall be upon the head of him that selleth it.... Pro 11:25 Generosity will be rewarded: Give a cup of water, and you will receive a cup of water in return. CEV

We own nothing! We are stewards of this time and this place. Your eternal soul has by the grace and purpose of God been given a temporary residence in this your body. Your soul could have been in an African body, an Indian body or any other body but it would still have been you. I am still me whether I am here or in another country.

So God has given me a task to manage His gifts and providence. It is a pointless question to ask why am I here, when what we should be asking is what am I doing with what I have. Many of us humans live selfish lives accumulating for ourselves with no thought of others. There is a story of a man who planned his life without God and paid a high price for it.

Luk 12:16 And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: He left everything he worked for to another and tasted nothing of his labours. There are those who are openly selfish and greedy. Such a one was Nabal. I wonder if this was a nickname, for if his parents gave him it, it was prophetic for it means “fool”.

1Sa 25:5 And David sent out ten young men, and David said unto the young men, Get you up to Carmel, and go to Nabal, and greet him in my name:

Generosity receives its own reward. It is a Divine law. *Pro 11:25 Generosity will be rewarded.* This is strange in a sense because God rewards you for being generous with His things. You are an agent for God when you give and it pleases God that you do so. *2Co 9:7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful (Greek ἡλαρόν whence hilarious) giver.*

I also believe that generous people are grateful people and you can see that those who are seldom thankful to God will also have a mean streak. *Mar 14:3 And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head. Mar 14:4 And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made? Mar 14:5 For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her.*

The money could indeed have been given to the poor. Clearly there are other classes of giving generously out of esteem and love for others. The poor have their everlasting place amongst us but they are not our only focus of kindness.

We do not know where the mortal remains of Mary were laid to rest. *Joh 11:2 (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.)* We have no pictures of her but this we know that her memorial is a reward of generosity. *Mar 14:9 Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.*

Pro 11:29 He that troubleth his own house shall inherit the wind

Pro 11:29 He that troubleth his own house shall inherit the wind: and the fool shall be servant to the wise of heart. Pro 11:30 The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise. Pro 11:31 Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner.

"*Inherit the Wind*" was the title of a 1960 film of a fictionalized account of the 1925 Scopes Trial (the "Monkey" Trial, defence lawyer Clarence Darrow and teacher John Scopes), which resulted in Scopes' conviction for teaching Charles Darwin's theory of evolution to a high school science class, contrary to a Tennessee state law that mandated the teaching of a form of creationism. It was not intended as a documentary-drama about the Scopes trial but as a warning about the evils of McCarthyism which some see as one of the darkest moments in American history. Causing trouble to your own people as Senator Joe McCarthy did to Americans in his anti-communist witch hunts was viewed as troubling your own house.

Inheriting the wind is a euphemism for running on air or having nothing. People by the lives that they live especially in respect to their families can leave themselves outcasts because they are viewed as nothing but trouble. You may, in July 2007, have seen the video of David Hasslehoff (Baywatch star) filmed by his daughter. He was filmed in a drunken state as an attempt to shock him into getting back on the wagon. He is asked why he does this to himself and replies, "*Cause I'm*

lonely. I have trouble in my life," He has inherited the wind (lonely) and has troubled his house. He doesn't appear to make the connection that he is lonely as a result of troubling his household.

Divine justice is clearly not reserved for the afterlife. The way we behave has some immediate effects for example within the church. *1Co 11:29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. 1Co 11:30 For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.* If we see God's judgement within His own household, it is not unreasonable to see it without. Behold the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner.

I believe that as Christians we should look more discerningly at the issues that confront us in our daily lives. We should discern the Hand of God at work. If we pray for God to act then we should expect to see the results. In the work that I am involved in I no longer use the term "accident", because by definition it is an event with no known cause. I use the term crash. The world under God's sovereign rule has no chance events only a series of causes and effects all under Divine control.

Living a good life has its rewards in the here and now. God recompenses us. Not necessarily with money. The word for recompense (Hebrew **שלם** Salam) is also linked to the word for peace and safety. Christ in your lives is riches in and of itself. Ask yourself where you would be without Christ? *Luk 9:25 For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?*

The words of our Proverbs today have shown us at least 2 things.

1. The way that you live your life will be reflected in God's blessings
2. God is actively at work to reward or punish in the here and now.

Pro 12:1 Whoso loveth instruction loveth knowledge

Pro 12:1 Whoso loveth instruction loveth knowledge: but he that hateth reproof is brutish. AV Pro 12:1 To accept correction is wise, to reject it is stupid. CEV.

As children we lived in a world of continuing correction. It was part of our training for life. We become more reluctant to accept correction or instruction especially as adults because we view the motives as being critical rather than constructive. We are not listening to the correction but focusing on the corrector's motive which we view as putting us down rather than lifting us up. *Pro 15:10 Correction is grievous unto him that forsaketh the way: and he that hateth reproof shall die.*

We are often not ready to receive correction so it is probably wise if you are out to correct someone to choose the time and circumstances very carefully. Bad news must be handled sensitively especially if you want to keep the relationship going. Some time ago I heard of a store owner who wanted to make all of his staff redundant. His method was to set off the fire alarm and when everybody had evacuated the building and were assembled together he told them en masse! How insensitive to the circumstances of the individual?

We have also to identify whether we are correcting a sin or a personal preference and matter of conscience. The two must be handled very differently.

There are those that I have seen like to administer correction through others. They tell people in the hope that someone else will do their dirty work. We should remember Jesus' words that the delivery of correction should be one on one. *Mat 18:15 Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.*

I like the way that Nathan handles the correction of David in a very serious matter (2 Sam 12). It is one on one and he does it in such a way that the rod he makes to chastise David is taken from him by David who beats himself with it. There is a lesson here in the thoughtfulness of correction. I am sure that Nathan spent time in prayer and meditation before he approached David. The delivery is as important as the message delivered.

Correction is also embarrassing especially when you know that you are in the wrong. One way of making correction more acceptable is to view it as coming from God rather than His human instrument. *Pro 3:11 My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction:*

Correction is a necessary part of the Christian experience. *Heb 12:5 And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.* Correction is a mark of God's personal love for you.

The desire to "improve" and be a better Christian, should lead to a more self-critical attitude. We should spend time in self-examination. *1Co 11:28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. 2Co 13:5 Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?*

Pro 12:4 A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband

Pro 12:4 A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband: but she that maketh ashamed is as rottenness in his bones.

Crowns or hats symbolise the power, position or empire of a monarch or of a state governed by constitutional monarchy, a distinction or reward for achievement, especially a title signifying championship in a sport. Crowns in a sense about what we are. The word for crown is Heb. עטרה Atarah Gk. **Τίαρα** tiara, and in scripture there are a number of "tiaras" that we may obtain.

Pro 4:9 She (Wisdom) shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee. Pro 14:2) The crown of the wise is their riches: but the foolishness of fools is folly.... Pro 16:31 The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness..... Pro 17:6

Children's children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their father.... Isa 28:3 The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim, shall be trodden under feet:... Joh 19:5 Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man!Phi 4:1 Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved..... 2Ti 4:8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness,Rev 2 :10 Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

There is here another crown that defines a man, it is his wife. It is something that the scripture encourages a woman to aspire to. We hear much about liberating women and the position of women in the church and you get the impression for many women they feel hard done by and downtrodden. Yet here is a way for a woman to be in a sense above a man when she becomes his crowning glory, the crown on his head. It has been said that “Manners maketh man”. (William of Wykeham, Motto of Winchester College and New College, Oxford (1324 - 1404)). Here it says it is the woman who maketh the man.

1Co 11:3 But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. Headship is defined by the created order but that headship can only be real if the woman plays her created role as the crown of a man. She is not his head but on his head.

How does she become this crown? She is virtuous. This word derives from the Latin for man “vir”, Virtue [Lat. For manliness]. In philosophy it is the quality of good in human conduct. It is strange that women who would assume the position of the male miss the very characteristic of the man. I think that virtue is what Peter had in mind when he wrote: *1Pe 3:1 Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives.*

The way to win a good man is to become a virtuous woman. It is not the makeup and the trendiness that should be the focus. If men only like you for your appearance what are they after? Virtue is a filter that will protect you from the men of the world who have no care for their own character or yours.

Pro 12:5 The thoughts of the righteous are right

Pro 12:5 The thoughts of the righteous are right: but the counsels of the wicked are deceit. Pro 12:6 The words of the wicked are to lie in wait for blood: but the mouth of the upright shall deliver them. Pro 12:7 The wicked are overthrown, and are not: but the house of the righteous shall stand. Pro 12:8 A man shall be commended according to his wisdom: but he that is of a perverse heart shall be despised. Pro 12:9 He that is despised, and hath a servant, is better than he that honoureth himself, and lacketh bread. Pro 12:10 A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel. Pro 12:11 He that tilleth his land shall be satisfied with bread: but he that followeth vain persons is void of understanding. Pro 12:12 The wicked desireth the net of evil men: but the root of the righteous yieldeth fruit. Pro 12:13 The wicked is snared by the

transgression of his lips: but the just shall come out of trouble.

In John's Epistle the phrase "we know" occurs many times. It teaches us that there are eternal certainties that we can check if ever the devil sows a doubt in our minds that we are not Christ's children. We may also check against these "knows" on our spiritual path and apply corrections to our walk. These "knows" are the distinguishing traits of Christian character they are what make us different from the world.

In the book of Proverbs chapter 12 we are looking at similar distinguishing traits of Christian character and the Righteous are contrast with the character of the wicked. These characteristics are shown in not just in attitude but in actions, how we go about our lives, what we do and who we do it with. Today we live in an age where the lines between Christian and non-Christian are blurred because of the adoption of worldly values and common pursuits. Let James remind us! *Jam 4:4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.* That is a frightening statement!

Some of the distinguishing traits of a Christian character are:

1. **We think differently** because our minds are different. *Rom 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.* The wicked cannot think clearly because the devil has blinded their minds. What occupies your mind?
2. **We speak differently** because we think differently. Do you sound different or do you blend in nicely in today's world?
3. **We build differently** because we have different goals. We build on rock and not on sand. *Mat 7:24 Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:* We are not building for this life but for the next where treasure is incorruptible. What are you building?
4. **We care beyond ourselves** and remind ourselves that we have a duty to creation given by God. You will recall that William Wilberforce the Christian who removed un-consenting slavery also founded the RSPCA. Are we managers or consumers?
5. **We are concerned about the company we keep**, as has been observed, "A man is judged by the company he keeps". Its not so much a case of what do you say about your friends but what do they say about you? Have you ever revised your list of acquaintances?
6. **We are concerned with truth** not the politics of truth. Jesus spoke the truth often in a very blunt way. *Joh 4:16 Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly.* Sometimes we are oversensitive to others in the handling of truth.

We are supposed to be salt in this world. *Mat 5:13 Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.* How salty are you?

Distinguishing traits of christian character

			צדיק Righteous	רשע Wicked
Pro 12:5 The thoughts of the righteous <i>are</i> right: <i>but</i> the counsels of the wicked <i>are</i> deceit.	Mat 15:19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:	The thoughts	Right	Deceit
Pro 12:6 The words of the wicked <i>are</i> to lie in wait for blood: but the mouth of the upright shall deliver them.	Mat 15:11 Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.	The mouth	Saving	Murderous
Pro 12:7 The wicked are overthrown, and <i>are</i> not: but the house of the righteous shall stand.	Psa 127:1 Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh <i>but</i> in vain.	The house	Stable	Unstable
Pro 12:10 A righteous <i>man</i> regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked <i>are</i> cruel.	Gen 1:26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion	The beasts	Respected	Cruelly treated
Pro 12:12 The wicked desireth the net of evil <i>men</i> : but the root of the righteous yieldeth <i>fruit</i> .	1Co 5:9 I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: 1Co 5:10 Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters;	The company	Right men	Evil men
Pro 12:13 The wicked is snared by the transgression of <i>his</i> lips: but the just shall come out of trouble.	Joh 8:32 And ye shall KNOW the truth, and the truth shall make you free.	The truth	A freedom	A snare

THE KNOWS of JOHN's EPISTLES

1 Jo 2:3 And hereby we do KNOW that we KNOW him, if we keep his commandments. 1 Jo 2:4 He that saith, I KNOW him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 1 Jo 2:5 But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby KNOW we that we are in him.

1 Jo 2:18 Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we KNOW that it is the last time.

1 Jo 2:20 But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye KNOW all things. 1 Jo 2:21 I have not written unto you because ye KNOW not the truth, but because ye KNOW it, and that no lie is of the truth.

1 Jo 2:29 If ye KNOW that he is righteous, ye KNOW that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.

1 Jo 3:2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we KNOW that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

1 Jo 3:5 And ye KNOW that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.

1 Jo 3:14 We KNOW that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. 1 Jo 3:15 Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye KNOW that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

1 Jo 3:19 And hereby we KNOW that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.

1 Jo 3:24 And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.

1 Jo 4:2 Hereby KNOW ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God:

1 Jo 4:6 We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby KNOW we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.

1 Jo 4:13 Hereby KNOW we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.

1 Jo 5:2 By this we KNOW that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.

1 Jo 5:13 These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may KNOW that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

1 Jo 5:15 And if we KNOW that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we KNOW that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

1 Jo 5:18 We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not. 1 Jo 5:19 And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness. 1 Jo 5:20 And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

3 Jo 1:12 Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself: yea, and we also bear record; and ye KNOW that our record is true.

Pro 12:14 We are rewarded or punished for what we say and do.

Pro 12:14 From the fruit of the mouth is one satisfied with good, And the deed of man's hands returneth to him.

While there is no judgement for believers there is a review of what each of us has achieved as Christians. *1Co 3:8 Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.*

In fact the day of judgement will look at the works of all men. *Rev 20:11 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. Rev 20:12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. Rev 20:13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in*

them: and they were judged every man according to their works. Rev 20:14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. Rev 20:15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. This informs us that there is a record being made of all things that men do, even the secret things. Those evil men who oppressed and murdered their fellow men will literally be brought to book. It will be an interesting day and probably a long one as each person is compelled to stand before God.

The evidence will not be open to question as it will be the most perfect record of what each has done. All generations those past and present and those to come will hear the deeds of their neighbours. We shall see them all. There will stand the Kings and Queens, Emperors and Tsars, Lords and Ministers, together with the common man. Out will come the lies, the evils, the plotting, the theft, the blasphemies, the murders. They will be led away to serve an eternity in each other's company and I think that some of the torment of hell will be the victims taunting the perpetrators.

It is a fearful thought that should of its self cause men to think about their lives and actions that have consequences that will determine eternity.

Now will Christians be accounting for their works in the presence of the rest of mankind? I think that there is evidence that we are dealt with separately. Believers are raised as a group. *1Th 4:16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:*

I think that there is a separate tribunal for the believers not a judgement of sin as that has been dealt with already. *Rom 8:1 If you belong to Christ Jesus, you won't be punished.* CEV. There is a judgement of works in the presence of Christ. *2Co 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.* This is the handing out of rewards. *1Co 3:14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.*

You can see that some Christians will have built hay, wood and stubble and when these works are refined in the fire of God's presence they will yield ash, none the less the person will be saved.

Knowles Shaw, who tragically was killed in a rail crash in 1878, wrote a hymn on the judgement of Belshazzar in which he cleverly linked it to our situation. It is called "The writing on the wall".

So our deeds are recorded—there's a Hand that's writing now;
Sinner, give your heart to Jesus, to His royal mandates bow;
For the day is approaching—it must come to one and all,
When the sinners' condemnation will be written on the wall!

Pro 12:25 Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop

Pro 12:25 Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop (depress): but a good word maketh it glad.

"Cheer up, things could be worse!", so I took their advice and did cheer up, and they were right, it did get worse." So said James Haggerty, President Eisenhower's press secretary. This is a cynical view of life that there is no remedy for depression and things just get worse.

Britain has one of the highest suicide rates in Europe. Each year in the UK over 5,000 more people take their own life, than die in road accidents. The Samaritans estimate that in the UK there is a suicide every 82 minutes. The charity Depression Alliance estimates that each year there are around 19,000 suicide attempts by UK adolescents whilst more than 2 million children attend GP's surgeries with some kind of psychological or emotional problem.

Each day, two people under the age of 24 commit suicide. In 1997, 1,757 young adult males committed suicide whilst only 412 females committed suicide. One reason is thought to be because males choose more lethal (and thus successful) methods of suicide such as hanging, shooting or jumping in front of a train. Around 200 people commit suicide by train every year, with another 50 killing themselves on the London underground. In the UK, suicide has taken over from road accidents as the number one cause of death for young adult males in the age range 18-24. Suicide statistics show that in the UK at least 16 children kill themselves each year because they are being bullied at school and no-one in authority is doing anything about it.

Our verse suggests that the remedy need not be a chemical cosh (drugs) but a word, a good word. One of the good words of the New Testament that often proceeds from angels is "Fear not". Heaviness is often brought about by fears and uncertainties that bring with it a helplessness of circumstances out of control. As Christians we do not live in a world of uncertainties because God is in control. The apparent uncertainties are often sent to bring us to the end of our own resources to the point of reliance on God's resources (The prodigal son). He will bring us to the grave, He will bring us to the mire of the pigsty, He will bring us to the fear of men and then He will show us that they are not fears but opportunities for God to work.

It does not say that Christians are exempt heaviness, but there are those who can lift the heavy heart. *Mat 14:27 But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.* Is it possible to be downcast and miserable in the presence of Christ? As we have suggested, the measure of our depression is the distance we are from Christ. *Psa 73:16 When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.* It was "in the sanctuary", that is, in the presence of God that Asaph found the remedy to his depression. *Psa 73:28 But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all thy works.*

Psa 42:11 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

The good word is a God word.

Pro 12:27 The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting

Pro 12:27 The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting: but the substance of a diligent man is precious. AV..... Pro 12:27 Anyone too lazy to cook will starve, but a hard worker is a valuable treasure. CEV

Once I refused to pay for a game of tennis because the groundsman could not give me a receipt. My complaint to the council was upheld but it illustrates the lack of stewardship from council workers. If you were employing someone would you allow such a lack of accountability? Its another case of "Its not my business".

I thought about this when meditating on this verse "a hard worker is a valuable treasure" and it occurred to me that a good worker is a good steward and a good worker runs your business as if it was his own. Joseph was just such a man. *Gen 41:39 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art: Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou.*

Hard workers are indeed "treasures". In South Africa and Namibia in the Post Apartheid era, black economic empowerment (BEP) and affirmative action (AA) have arisen from the ashes. In practice you are obligated to employ people on the basis of race and gender, irrespective of whether they are qualified or capable of doing the job. This is destroying many small businesses.

I like the idea of short term contracts because it enables an employer to get rid of poor staff and it keeps staff on their toes. Employment law has swung too much in favour of the worker rather than the employer.

However there are times when the good employee is frustrated by his boss. His boss may be lazy, overbearing, rude, ungrateful...the list can go on. In situations like this it is not unnatural to ask "what is the point of doing a good job, I'm not appreciated". We have to learn a lesson here and that is that all of our service should be as if we were working directly for Jesus.

Eph 6:5 Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; Eph 6:6 Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; Eph 6:7 With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men:

It is not about doing things properly when the boss is around (eye service) it is about doing it right when the boss is not there. It is about being productive and not wasting time. Employees wasting time is just like having "unemployed" people on your payroll. The average worker admits to frittering away 2.09 hours per day, not counting lunch. The number one way they waste time at work is personal Internet use (e.g. email, Instant Messaging, online polls, interactive games, message boards, chat rooms, etc.). Some of the UK's biggest companies spend an average of £10,000 per

person per year paying employees to read and write unnecessary emails. One FTSE 100 firm estimated that email cost £39 million per annum.

The hard worker is a real treasure!

Pro 12:28 Follow the road to life, and you won't be bothered by death.

Pro 12:28 In the way of righteousness is life; and in the pathway thereof there is no death.

Thanatophobia or Thantophobia is Fear of death or dying. Fear of death is natural if you feel threatened in some way, after all your survival instinct is an essential drive for the "Flight or fight response". Fear can on occasion be related to common sense. Fearing a lion in the desert is probably a very good thing if you want to live.

To many people its not being dead that is the problem, it is the fear of dying, the process. As Woody Allen said, *"I am not afraid of death, I just don't want to be there when it happens. And I don't want to achieve immortality through my work... I want to achieve it through not dying"*. Perhaps humour is the way that some people cope with the uncertainties and fears of death but for sure it will happen to us all sooner or later.

There is however a deeper side to this fear of death and it is spiritually implanted in man. *Heb 2:14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; Heb 2:15 And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.*

This fear of death is predicated on the judgement to come. *Heb 9:27 And as it is appointed (reserved) unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.* Certainly for many souls this life has been like hell but it is nothing to the hell to come. The common word for hell in the Greek is Hades which means the unseen place or the grave and much of what it is about is unknown to us. So it is not surprising that the person who talks most about it was the Son of God and it is a major theme in His ministry.

There is another word that we have translated hell and it is Gehenna. *Mat 23:33 Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?* This aspect of hell reflected the torment and punishment, Gehenna being the valley where the rubbish of Jerusalem was discarded.

Our verse today shows us that these fears can be totally removed so that you can get on in peace. The road to life is the road to Christ. *Joh 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*

We suggested a few weeks ago that the measure of our depression is the distance we are from Christ. We might say the same of fear that it is a measure of the distance we are from the hand of Christ. *Mat 14:30 But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. Mat 14:31 And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?*

Three thousand years ago David was led to write a song that sums up the thoughts of our verse in Proverbs. It is the 23rd Psalm.

Psa 23:4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Pro 13:1 Children with good sense accept correction from their parents

Pro 13:1 Children with good sense accept correction from their parents, but stubborn children ignore it completely.

Time and time again, the subject of correction rears up before us in Proverbs so it must be important for us to think about. There are times when you are young that you think that your parents are deliberately out to spoil your fun and make your life miserable. *Heb 12:11 Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.*

You can look around you and see what sort of person you become if your parents let you do what you want. You probably would lie in bed all day, be rude and ungrateful, mix with all sorts of undesirable characters and before long get arrested for a misdemeanour. It is the natural progress of the undisciplined soul. *Isa 53:6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.* We have a natural tendency to stray and wander. Human error is a major cause of accidents, 95% in the case of car crashes. Human error has led to some fatal design flaws in aircraft and consequent deaths whether in the design phase or actual pilot error.

Parental correction is about how to do things for the best in the best way. What we don't like about correction is the effort to move from where we are to the other position. It takes effort like moving a rusted bolt or opening a door that hasn't been used for years but it can be done.

So often we put the emphasis here on the child but it is also speaking to the parent. Parents have a duty to God Society and their children. *Deu 21:18 If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them: Deu 21:19 Then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place; Deu 21:20 And they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard. Deu 21:21 And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear.* The parents who seemed to have failed, as a last resort brought the child to the community for that community to act against their child. We see in scripture that many parents fail but we also see that if they do not apply the sanctions that God demands, they in turn will be punished.

Take Eli for example. He was quick to accuse others of their failures and shortcomings but when it came to his own sons he pointed out their sin but took no action against them. *1Sa 1:14 And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee. 1Sa 2:12 Now the sons of Eli*

were sons of Belial; they knew not the LORD. 1Sa 2:22 Now Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did unto all Israel; and how they lay with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. 1Sa 2:23 And he said unto them, Why do ye such things? for I hear of your evil dealings by all this people. 1Sa 2:24 Nay, my sons; for it is no good report that I hear: ye make the LORD'S people to transgress. 1Sa 2:25 If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the LORD, who shall intreat for him? Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the LORD would slay them.

There is no doubt that Eli loved God but the problem was that Eli loved his sons more than he loved God. *1Sa 2:29 Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering, which I have commanded in my habitation; and honourest thy sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people?* He had put them on a pedestal and let them get away with evil.

Parents often indulge their children thinking that it is showing love but in reality they are killing them. Letting children get away with bad behaviour is sending a clear signal that what they do is acceptable. God killed Eli and his sons on the same day for this! I do not believe that God has changed one bit since the days of Samuel and Eli so I expect the same outcomes for disobedience.

If we are to honour father and mother then it must equally apply that parents must be honourable towards God. *Eph 6:1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Eph 6:2 Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) Eph 6:3 That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. Eph 6:4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.* Eli was asked why “honourest thy sons above me”. Eli was not an honourable man.

Pro 13:1 A wise son heareth his father's instruction

Pro 13:1 A wise son heareth his father's instruction: but a scorner heareth not rebuke. AV Pro 13:1 Children with good sense accept correction from their parents, but stubborn children ignore it completely. CEV

The media have been debating the reasons for growing violence and indiscipline in the society today. The parents of murdered Rhys Jones (August 2007) in Liverpool blamed the parents of the murderer for their failures and there is a growing belief that the problem lies in families and upbringing.

Pro 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it. The Jesuits knew that if they got a child before he was 8 years old they could make him a catholic for life. The verse teaches us this, that the formative years fix the future of the adult. If he is brought up in good, he will be a good man, if he is brought up in evil, he will become evil. The future adult is present in the child.

The problems of this generation were sown long ago in their grandparent's generation and beyond. The “swinging” 60's are portrayed as the teenage revolution that began the liberalisation of moral

values but can this be true? Do teenagers really have the power to shape a generation and create a revolution? No.

Social changes were already happening in the post-war period that would start the rot that had set in, long before it became recognised in its liberal forms (swinging sixties) and it has its roots in political social manipulation. It can be traced way back beyond Darwinism to where the Churches gave their power to the State and the State began to manipulate society.

In 1957 the Wolfenden Report recommended the decriminalisation of homosexuality. In 1960 the pill emancipated women, the lifting on the ban of Lady Chatterley legitimised pornography. With these liberalising of laws affecting homosexuals and obscene publications and the ending of capital punishment (under Harold Wilson) they paved the way for a new order. Abortion liberalisation became law in 1967. The continuing efforts to limit the power of the family and supplant it with social workers when things go wrong have resulted in parental indifference. Yes, parents are to blame, but is it too late in the day to expect them to pick up the reins that were stolen from them?

The crisis of our increasingly violent society has many contributory factors but at the root it is the lack of godly fathers making godly children. *Pro 13:1 Children with good sense accept correction from their parents*, That God given right to discipline has been stolen by the state. What results are we seeing?

Around 30,000 children left school with no GCSEs on the day after Rhys Jones died. One in five young Britons is without qualifications, work or training. No crude determinism ordains that the poor, especially those with the wrong postcode, become the killers and the dead but only a fool would deny a causal link between deprivation and the risk of carrying firearms for bravado or knives because of fear.

Labour's gambling reforms which come into effect next week will make it easier for children to bet online, experts warned. In August 2007 hundreds of foreign-based gaming websites are expected to start advertising on British TV and radio channels even though they are not regulated in the UK and do not pay tax here. In America millions of students are involved in internet gambling which leads to other crimes.

The social impact of the internet remains to be seen. Internet access was the new factor allowing a disaffected husband or wife to pursue other relationships while saying they were working at home. "It makes having extramarital relationships easier," Ms Northam said. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) said the divorce rate for men was highest in their early 30s with 27.7 divorces per 1,000 married men aged 30-34. Among women the divorce rate was highest in the 25-29 age group with 28.9 divorces per 1,000 married women.

The number of people being taken to hospital with alcohol related injuries and illnesses have doubled under the Labour government. Official statistics reveal today that 148,477 such patients were treated at accident and emergency wards in the last year compared with 75,863 in 1997 the year Tony Blair came to power. The total number of medical procedures carried out by the NHS for alcohol-related conditions such as liver disease has also virtually doubled from 133,223 in 1997 to

262,844 today. There are 367,000 violent attacks each year directly attributable to drinking and in some areas almost three in ten people admit binge drinking in the previous week. We could go on.

What happens when the law fails to protect society? They take the law into their own hands. Take this for an example.

He (the driver) said when she (the passenger) alighted from the taxi, a second taxi the Opel Astra car pulled up and a young man came out, walked towards her and snatched her hand bag. According to him the taxi which brought the lady picked her up again and gave the second taxi a hot chase.

He said while chasing the taxi the driver raised the alarm which caught the attention of people around and when the robbers ran into the private car the mob closed in on them and grabbed three of them and lynched them but the fourth man fired warning shots to facilitate his escape. ASP Afriyie said the police did not trace any empty shells there to determine the type of gun used by the escapee.

The three bodies have been deposited at the Police Hospital Mortuary for autopsy but none of them had been identified by press time while the two vehicles involved in the accident had been towed to the Osu Police Station. **Daily Graphic Ghana 14th August 2007.**

The French Revolution sprang out of this same scenario where those in power had failed to protect the interests of its citizens. The citizens took the law into their own hands and rewrote it.

What we are seeing in society today is the failure to act on God's law. The Bible is the Maker's handbook for a happy life. Neglect the handbook at your peril.

Pro 13:2 You will be well rewarded for saying something kind

Pro 13:2 You will be well rewarded for saying something kind, but all some people think about is how to be cruel and mean.

The Greek poet Euripides who died about 406 B.C. said, "The tongue is mightier than the blade." An observation that when it comes to hurting someone words can inflict far more pain. By the same token words can do a lot of good. James writes a short thesis on the power of the tongue. He describes it variously as a fire, a world of iniquity, it is an unruly evil and full of deadly poison. *Jam 3:5 Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! Jam 3:8 But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.*

However *Pro 15:1 A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger. Pro 12:25 Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad. Pro 15:23 A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word spoken in due season, how good is it! Pro 25:11 A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.*

There are a number of occasions when Jesus makes some very harsh remarks. *Mat 15:7 Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying,Mat 23:33 Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?..... Joh 8:44 Ye are of your father the devil,.... Mat 16:23 But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan:*

I think that the issue is, whether we use words to strike back at someone as a retaliatory blow or whether we are making a considered assessment of the situation that requires strong language to make a point. Cruelty and spite were certainly not part of Jesus' repertoire but contending with evil was.

How would you know whether your remarks were cruel or constructive? Well, I would say can you live with what you say? Have you ever said anything that you really regret? You may have made some seemingly unkind remarks but they were the truth because the truth often hurts.

I believe that we live in a time where truth counts for little and correctness counts for much. We are not encouraged to be critical or judgemental in respect of others. How would Jesus have fared in this generation? I also feel that in losing the right to criticise we are also losing the ability to praise and encourage.

There are rewards for kind words it says here. There are also those that live for nastiness, all some people think about is how to be cruel and mean. What I also feel is sad about this, is that it appeals to people (Jeremy Kyle, Gerry Springer) it makes for entertaining viewing and it says something about the world we live in.

Pro 13:4 The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing

Pro 13:4 The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat. AV Pro 13:4 No matter how much you want, laziness won't help a bit, but hard work will reward you with more than enough. CEV

There are six proverbs about the sluggard and none of them complimentary. Lazy people are not viewed as good people but at least in Bible times they suffered at their own hands. Dealing with the poor has always been an issue of social conscience but we should distinguish between the genuinely destitute and those beggars who can work but will not work.

The Bible does not encourage the support of the idle. *2Th 3:10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.* You do not feed slothful people. Hard work is part of the curse of life. *Gen 3:19 In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.*

The social cost of idleness was recognised years ago. The Ordinance of Labourers prohibited private relief to able-bodied beggars. (The purpose of the 1350 Ordinance was to supplement and reinforce certain points of the 1349 Ordinance which had been left vague). In 1492 "Vagabonds, idle and

suspected persons shall be set in the stocks for three days and three nights and have none other sustenance but bread and water and then shall be put out of Town. Every beggar suitable to work shall resort to the Hundred where he last dwelled, is best known, or was born and there remain upon the pain aforesaid". This was the Vagabonds and Beggars Act (11 Henry VII c.2)

In 1601 the Poor Law Act placed administration of the poor rates in the hands of each local parish. Since some parishes were more generous than others many poor people moved to where relief was higher. This led to objections by payers of the poor rate and in 1662 the Settlement Acts were passed to prevent such movements. These had the unfortunate side-effect of reducing mobility of labour and made it difficult for those without work to seek it elsewhere.

Sir Edward Knatchbull's Act (An Act for amending the Laws relating to the Settlement, Employment, and Relief of the Poor 1723) enabled workhouses to be set up by parishes or groups of parishes and the workhouse test was introduced whereby the workhouse, a place of asylum for the poor, would serve as a deterrent and relief would be available only to those willing to submit to its rigorous regime.

An Act for the Amendment and better Administration of the Laws relating to the Poor in England and Wales, The "new" Poor Law, 1834 cut off completely all relief-money to the able-bodied. In fact, it revised pretty well the whole system of poor relief that had operated so far. The aged, sick or child paupers were compelled to enter work-houses where they were forced to perform degrading labour.

It was at this stage that socialism with its ungodly but seemingly well meaning doctrines stepped in. All Poor Law Unions were abolished in 1930 and their functions were transferred to the Administrative County Councils. This led to the provision of relief for the unemployed (later called 'public assistance') by the National Assistance Board (1934).

Why this history lesson? It is because we have thrown the Bible away and it is penalising us financially. We have to pay for being ungodly and we have to pay the lazy ungodly, all 5 million of them.

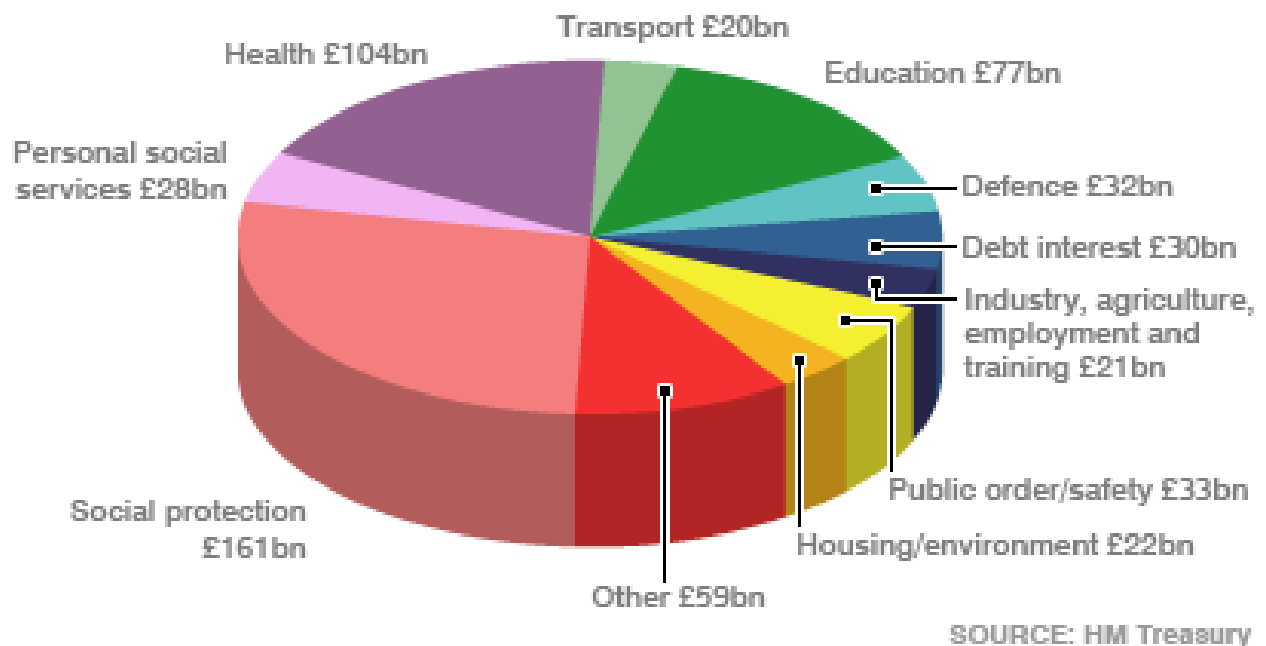
Taking into account the potential tax revenue lost, the analysis shows the cost of unemployment in the UK is £61 billion a year (2007) with more than five million who could work claiming benefits, this is nearly six times the £11 billion official cost of unemployment benefits (Daily Mail 22/09/07). It is twice the Defence budget. It can be done because the UK is at present reasonably rich but it is not an option in Africa. There is no spare cash to pay the idle.

We also see a related issue to idleness and that is spending money before it is earned, so called credit. Average consumer borrowing via credit cards, motor and retail finance deals, overdrafts and unsecured personal loans has risen to £4,515 for the average UK adult at the end of July 2007. The interest rates are high due to the fact that many fail to repay debt. *Pro 22:7 The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.*

Lending in Bible times was always against a pledge. *Gen 38:17 And he said, I will send thee a kid from the flock. And she said, Wilt thou give me a pledge, till thou send it?* Failure to redeem the pledge meant that you paid with your life. You became a slave.

The Bible encourages us both to work and avoid debt. We shall see idleness and debt becoming more and more of an issue in our society because they are unsustainable.

Are we idle in heaven?



Pro 13:5 A good person hates deceit

Pro 13:5 A good person hates deceit, but those who are evil cause shame and disgrace. CEV

Do you remember in the film "Saving Private Ryan" what the words Captain John H Miller must have spoken to Ryan as he (Miiller) lay dying from his wounds? "Be a good man". Are you a good person? Here is one of the tests. The test proves that you hate deceit. Deceit is the act or practice of deceiving, deception, a stratagem, a trick. Deceit is sometimes lying to someone by actions rather than words. A good example of this is in the Bible between Jacob and Esau. *Gen 27:22 And Jacob went near unto Isaac his father; and he felt him, and said, The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau.*

We are warned. *Ex 20 v 16 You shall not make false witness against your neighbour.* We live in a world of deceit. Standing alongside President Bush in April 2003, Tony Blair declared that, "On weapons of mass destruction, we know that the regime has them, we know that as the regime collapses we will be led to them. We pledged to disarm Iraq of weapons of mass destruction and we will keep that commitment." Seventy-three days after the invasion began there were still no reliable signs that Iraq had any chemical, biological or nuclear weapons or has had any over the past eight

years. Indeed the only reliable signs of illicit weapons that have been found in Iraq are the cluster bombs that were dropped from US and UK jets.

Phone-ins have also proved deceitful. Shortlists of winners have been drawn up before phone lines have shut, TV staff have pretended to be competition winners on air and virtually unanswerable questions set. Richard Ayre former deputy chief executive of BBC News and now head of Watchdog, the Office of Communications (Ofcom) said the culture of TV has led in some instances to a blatant disregard for the truth. Last week (7 July 2007) the BBC was fined £50,000 for persuading a child guest in the Blue Peter studio to pose as the winner of a phone-in competition. The show allowed a child visiting the studio to pose as a caller when technical problems stopped real calls getting through to the studio. Media watchdog Ofcom criticised the BBC for "negligence" and for "making a child "complicit" in the deception.

The hosts of Blue Peter have apologised to viewers on air about the rigging of a poll to name the show's cat. The cat was named Socks after the results of an online poll were changed. Viewers of the BBC One show had wanted to call the cat Cookie. Speaking on behalf of the programme, presenter Zoe Salmon told viewers: "We'd like to say that we're sorry." Yeah?

Premium rate services regulator ICSTIS slapped a £150,000 penalty on Eckoh UK Ltd. It also ordered a sanction to provide refunds to all those affected. The company was punished after an inquiry into allegations that the "You Say, We Pay" telephone quiz on Channel 4's Richard and Judy show urged viewers to call in even though potential winners had already been chosen.

Ever thought that McDonalds was healthy, no me neither but they tried hard to convince people that it was. The Attorneys General of Texas, California and New York concluded a joint review of McDonald's (1987) advertising campaign which claims that McDonald's food is nutritious. "Our mutual conclusion is that this advertising campaign is deceptive. We therefore request that McDonald's immediately cease and desist further use of this advertising campaign. The reason for this is simple: McDonald's food is as a whole, not nutritious. The intent and result of the current campaign is to deceive customers into believing the opposite. Fast food customers often choose to go to McDonald's because it is inexpensive and convenient. They should not be fooled into eating there because you have told them it is also nutritious.....The new campaign appears intended to pull the wool over the public's eyes."

Last Friday the BBC One controller Peter Fincham resigned after an investigation into footage that misrepresented the Queen. A documentary trailer was edited out of sequence and Mr Fincham wrongly told the press it showed the monarch walking out of a photo session "in a huff". The BBC has come under further scrutiny.

Deceit is used every day in advertising. You do not advertise cosmetics using ugly women. Oh what a tangled web we weave, when first we practise to deceive! Sir Walter Scott.

Here are some of the lengths that you have to go to to get people to behave honestly and responsibly.

TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL ANTI-CORRUPTION TRAINING MANUAL

Fraud is a criminal offence in most jurisdictions. It is sometimes referred to as “deception”. Fraud usually involves one person (or group of persons) deceiving another person in order to gain some financial or other advantage.

Situation. A senior manager requires you (as a more junior officer or employee) to participate in bribery or fraud.

Example: You are requested by a senior person in your company to participate in:

Bribery, in order to help the company to make a profit or win a contract, or to obtain a certificate, permit or payment.

Fraud, in order to help the company increase its profit or avoid loss or liability (for example, by submitting an inflated claim, or by concealing a defect so as to avoid the company incurring rectification costs).

Bribery and fraud, where, for example, as company legal adviser, you are asked to draft an agency agreement which you suspect conceals a bribe arrangement.

Legal position: If you participate in the activity knowing or suspecting that bribery or fraud is involved, it is likely that you and your employer will be liable for bribery or fraud. It will not be a defence for you to say that you were requested to commit the offence by a senior person, or that you were not personally benefiting, or that you thought it was normal business practice. If you are caught, it is possible that the company’s senior management will disassociate themselves from you so as to avoid incurring liability themselves. **Caution:** Do not do or say anything which could put you or another person in danger.

Suggested direct action: Refuse to participate in the bribery or fraud – even if you are threatened with dismissal or demotion. It is not worth it to you personally. If you participate and are caught, you face personal criminal liability and possible imprisonment.

Do you hate deceit? Then you are a good person.

Pro 13:7 There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing

Pro 13:7 There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches.

We might not like to agree with this. Surely it is good to be comfortably wealthy and better than being in poverty? *Pro 30:8 Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me:* Clearly there is a balance. Poverty brings its own set of problems and riches likewise. This verse is not saying that it is bad to be rich and good to be poor. It is saying that there are other riches to be had than manmade possessions.

Luk 12:15 And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. I am not the sum total of my possessions.

I think we should look at this verse as the eye of God sees us. Riches and power count for nothing with God since it all belongs to Him. The small and the great are all the same before Him. *Rev 20:12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another*

book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. What did they do with their life? God's recorder is running. No one gets away with anything. Its all there. Men who cheat and seem to get away with it in this life are brought up short in the next.

What then does God require of us? *Mic 6:8 He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* God sees us in the spectrum of morality.

Riches can disable that morality for example the rich ruler. *Luk 18:22 Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. Luk 18:23 And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich.*

What did he "lack"? He was covetous and lacked generosity. God saw this as his deficiency. Others may be rich and generous but liars, or thieves or adulterers. Their earthly riches enable them to indulge in other vices. Riches in some measure clog up their lives. It can provide distraction and activities that draw us away from time with Christ. Riches can provide tremendous amounts of time fillers.

I think that this is at the root of the problem. Those who spend time in the things of God will inevitably see that they are lacking true and lasting riches, the treasure of heaven not of earth. This poverty carries its own blessing. *Mat 5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

Pro 13:10 Too much pride causes trouble.

Pro 13:10 Too much pride causes trouble. Be sensible and take advice. CEVPro 13:10 Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom. AV.

Pride is an attitude where someone makes themselves to be more important than they are. They are said to have an inflated opinion of themselves. They are as we might say, puffed up, or pompous. *1Co 4:6 And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another.*

Sometimes we say that a person takes pride in himself because he is clean and smart. I think that this is the wrong use of the word pride. I think we mean that the person cares for themselves.

King Uzziah is an example of pride. *2Ch 26:16 But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense.* He was punished with leprosy.

Miriam suffered a similar fate. *Num 12:1 And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman.*

Saul was another person who grew too big for his boots. *1Sa 15:17 And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the LORD anointed thee king over Israel?*

As we reflect on this on Remembrance Sunday about the huge loss of life in the wars of history, we will often see national pride at the root of conflict, proud men unwilling to back down or seek compromise. Well says the scripture that: *Pro 16:18 Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.*

We see a wonderful example of a peacemaker overcoming the arrogance and pride of her husband in the life of Abigail. *1Sa 25:10 And Nabal answered David's servants, and said, Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? there be many servants now a days that break away every man from his master. 1Sa 25:11 Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men, whom I know not whence they be? 1Sa 25:12 So David's young men turned their way, and went again, and came and told him all those sayings. 1Sa 25:13 And David said unto his men, Gird ye on every man his sword. And they girded on every man his sword; and David also girded on his sword: and there went up after David about four hundred men; and two hundred abode by the stuff. 1Sa 25:14 But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, saying, Behold, David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master; and he railed on them. 1Sa 25:15 But the men were very good unto us, and we were not hurt, neither missed we any thing, as long as we were conversant with them, when we were in the fields: 1Sa 25:16 They were a wall unto us both by night and day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep. 1Sa 25:17 Now therefore know and consider what thou wilt do; for evil is determined against our master, and against all his household: for he is such a son of Belial, that a man cannot speak to him. 1Sa 25:18 Then Abigail made haste, and took two hundred loaves, and two bottles of wine, and five sheep ready dressed, and five measures of parched corn, and an hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid them on asses. 1Sa 25:19 And she said unto her servants, Go on before me; behold, I come after you. But she told not her husband Nabal. 1Sa 25:20 And it was so, as she rode on the ass, that she came down by the covert of the hill, and, behold, David and his men came down against her; and she met them. 1Sa 25:21 Now David had said, Surely in vain have I kept all that this fellow hath in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that pertained unto him: and he hath requited me evil for good. 1Sa 25:22 So and more also do God unto the enemies of David, if I leave of all that pertain to him by the morning light any that pisseth against the wall. 1Sa 25:23 And when Abigail saw David, she hastened, and lighted off the ass, and fell before David on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, 1Sa 25:24 And fell at his feet, and said, Upon me, my lord, upon me let this iniquity be: and let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak in thine audience, and hear the words of thine handmaid. 1Sa 25:25 Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, even Nabal: for as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him: but I thine handmaid saw not the young men of my lord, whom thou didst send. 1Sa 25:26 Now therefore, my lord, as the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, seeing the LORD hath withholden thee from coming to shed blood, and from avenging thyself with thine own hand, now let thine enemies, and they that seek evil to my lord, be as Nabal.*

As our scripture says, *too much pride causes trouble*, so what is the remedy for pride? It is humility. *1Pe 5:6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:*

Num 12:3 (Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.) What rare creatures are meek and humble leaders.

Pro 13:11 Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished

Pro 13:11 Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labour shall increase.

You may recall the speech that Gerald Ratner made to the institute of directors in 1991.

Ratner recounts, “I had worked b***** hard for 30 years, making millions of pounds for shareholders and creating thousands of jobs for a company I loved and I had suddenly had it taken away from me. Not for doing anything criminal. I hadn’t embezzled. I hadn’t lied. All I had done was say a sherry decanter was crap.

It says something about our society that people like to list what I lost in monetary terms: a £650,000 salary, £500m wiped off the valuation of my company and a billion-pound turnover slashed overnight. One gag that had always got a laugh was a comment about how we were able to sell a sherry decanter for less than a tenner (punch line: because it was total crap). I also had another joke about a pair of our earrings that were cheaper than a Marks & Spencer prawn sandwich.

The next morning, my driver was reading the Mirror and holding The Sun. He didn’t say anything and just handed me the papers. The headline in The Sun was “Crapners”. The Mirror’s front page screamed, “You 22 carat gold mugs”. I was so shocked and weirdly scared that I started shaking.”

The story was basically the same here was this guy, whose company is worth hundreds of millions of pounds who’s making fun of his customers and enjoys selling crap. They were effectively telling their readers that they would be idiots to buy anything from me ever again.

As it says “Money wrongly gotten will disappear bit by bit, money earned little by little will grow and grow”.

At this time of the year easy money is available on credit cards. Research from Alliance & Leicester Personal Loans revealed 23 per cent of people use store cards to finance Christmas spending. Half of these people picked up their card at the point of purchase to fund impulse spending.

I put this in the category “wrongly gotten”. Apparently, consumers aged 35 to 44 years old are most likely to still be paying off debt from Christmas 2006 a year later with 14% still suffering a financial

hangover. In addition a financial comparison site has pointed out that someone carrying a balance of £1,000 at an interest rate of 16.9% will have spent around £169 in interest over the last year. This interest burden paid by each household in the UK is £3,327 each year. The interest rate is inappropriately high because of the high level of unsecured loan debt. The average consumer borrowing on credit cards, motor and retail finance, overdrafts and unsecured personal loans rose to £4,511 per person at the end of 2006.

Credit card spending dropped in the first few months of 2007 partly due to the fact that some cards now have interest rates over 25% and include fees for 'not' spending on the card. If you apply for a credit card from a sub-prime lender be prepared for interest bills that could really go through the roof. Vanquis for example, charges an APR (annual percentage rate) of between 39.9% and 59.9%. Considering most traditional credit card companies typically charge around 15% APR this is a long way off a competitive deal.

The birds are coming home to roost.

Pro 13:12 Hope deferred maketh the heart sick

Pro 13:12 Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life.

The Jews must have been a sad people. They had endured many hardships, exiles and humiliations in the name of their faith but God had given them a promise. The promise was given by Isaiah at a time when the Nation was becoming ripe for judgement. It was a glimmer of hope in a darkening world. The prophecy starts with a rebuke and describes how the nation was debased. *Isa 1:22 Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water:* A society lacking true substance and value.

Yet out of that they were encouraged to see a brave new world (Isaiah 40) a world where a new leader would arise to deliver them....in another 700 years. The earnestness of the prophecy must have encouraged people to think that it was near to hand and some must have eagerly awaited it as they streamed home from exile. How disappointed they must have been. Hope deferred makes the heart sick.

The centuries passed and the hope of Israel, the hope of the World did not arrive but then one year, in Bethlehem of Judea the Hope was fulfilled. An old man could die in peace. *Luk 2:26 And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.* An old woman Anna gave thanks and spoke of the meaning of this event that redemption had arrived.

How many sad generations passed away living in hope but ever disappointed that it had not come to fruition but look at those who saw its realisation. To them it was a tree of life. All they had wanted was now in full fruit. It was a tree of life because "when desire comes it is a tree of life".

The current Christmas song "We're all gonna die" (Malcolm Middleton 2007) has some interesting lines, "Baby gettin born, old man dyin' Young lady laughin, old women cryin', Leavin' like a lamb

comin' back like a lion, Babylon to Zion, we're all gonna die". I think that one reason people like Christmastide is because it has a timeless and peaceful quality that separates it from the real world. An oasis in the horrors of life. But the song has it right...we're all gonna die.

As those Jews of old looked to the first "Christmas" we should be looking to the next "Christmas". How should we anticipate the coming again of Christ? Are we sad that it delays or is it not something that concerns us? There must have been Jews of old that certainly had lost interest in the prophecy but there were certainly those who held it as the focus and reason for living. They lived to welcome Christ.

Paul looks forward and encourages the Saints. *2Th 2:1 Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, 2Th 2:2 That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.*

That day is coming and we should be happy that every day that passes is a day closer to the great event. Like Paul our lives should reflect our Hope. *Act 28:20 because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.*

Pro 13:13 Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed

Pro 13:13 Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed: but he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded.

We have seen in other studies how the rise of Biblical Criticism was instrumental in the Downgrade Controversy of the 19th century and led to a decline in church attendance.

Higher criticism is a lofty name given to critical studies of the Bible that treat it as a text created by human beings at a particular historical time and for various human motives in contrast with the treatment of the Bible as the inerrant word of God. The phrase "lower criticism" was used for attempts to interpret Biblical texts based only on the internal evidence from the texts themselves.

I can only think that it is the devil who wants to undermine the word of God and that he used these so called scholars to do his evil bidding. If there was any doubt as to how we should treat God's words it is made clear here.

So closely is Christ the Saviour linked to the truth of God that he is called the WORD. *Joh 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. Christmas is about God's word becoming a fleshly reality. *Joh 1:14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*

Any assault on Christ is an assault on the Word and as our text says it will result in destruction. I get very angry when I see or hear these assaults. We would not tolerate it with our own family and we should remember that we are part of Christ's family.

The devil's assault on Christ was an assault upon the word of God (Matthew Chapter 4). It challenged three things:

1. *Mat 4:4 But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. **How to live?***
2. *Mat 4:7 Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. **How to believe?***
3. *Mat 4:10 Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. **How to worship?***

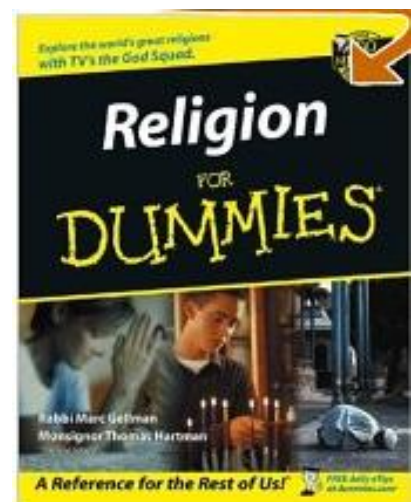
We should note that the devil will endeavour to undermine every aspect of our lives in very subtle serpent like ways. They are designed to make us disbelieve the word of God. If we have any uncertainties about God's word in the light of this text we should take the example of the man who's child was possessed. He found Jesus' words hard to accept but he did not reject them. He asked for the faith to believe them. *Mar 9:24 And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.* Faith is not strengthened through criticism.

Ecc 12:1 Keep your Creator in mind while you are young! In years to come, you will be burdened down with troubles and say, "I don't enjoy life anymore." Ecc 12:2 Someday the light of the sun and the moon and the stars will all seem dim to you. Rain clouds will remain over your head. Ecc 12:3 Your body will grow feeble, your teeth will decay, and your eyesight fail. Ecc 12:4 The noisy grinding of grain will be shut out by your deaf ears, but even the song of a bird will keep you awake. Ecc 12:5 You will be afraid to climb up a hill or walk down a road. Your hair will turn as white as almond blossoms. You will feel lifeless and drag along like an old grasshopper. We each go to our eternal home, and the streets are filled with those who mourn. Ecc 12:6 The silver cord snaps, the golden bowl breaks; the water pitcher is smashed, and the pulley at the well is shattered. Ecc 12:7 So our bodies return to the earth, and the life-giving breath returns to God.

Pro 13:15 Good understanding giveth favour

Pro 13:15 Good understanding giveth favour: but the way of transgressors is hard.

We live in a great age of making things easy. For example, you can find a book explaining anything in simple terms, for "Dummies". There is even a book titled "Religion for Dummies". There are a host of devices that are designed to make your life easier such as dishwashers, microwaves, processed foods, ready meals, instant coffee, Ready brek. You can buy



things more easily through plastic money, PayPal, instant credit and store cards.

Our computers are becoming easier to use with all of the complex operations hidden behind windows, a far cry from the days of DOS1 and machine code. The simpler it becomes, the wider the market because I suppose, most people are basically dummies and today it is not a term of reproach. To be stupid today is no different to being black, white or some ethnic minority. It is a politically correct lifestyle.

Stupidity is worshipped on the altar of life. The persons that the public are often most interested in are the most stupid or greatest risk takers. If you type "stupid people" into Google, you will find a wealth of information and some very funny video clips on You Tube.

There was an age where stupid people and stupidity was shunned and only sensible persons were admired but we live in an age of dummies and easy ways. Or so we may think. "The way of transgressors is hard". For all its ease there is a great nostalgia for the past because the truth is for many people the quality of life is not better today despite our attempts to make it so. London is ranked as having the worst quality of life in Europe.

The story of wealth failing to translate into extra happiness is the story of the Western world. In almost every developed country happiness levels have remained largely static over the past 50 years - despite huge increases in income. What the happiness research suggests is that once average incomes reach about £10,000 a year extra money does not make a country any happier. The proportion of people in the UK saying they are "very happy" has fallen from 52% in 1957 to just 36% today. Polling data from Gallup throughout the 1950s shows happiness levels above what they are today, suggesting that our extra wealth has not brought extra well-being.

I think that there is a correlation between that decline in happiness and the decline in religion over the same period. With the decline in religion there is the decline in commonly held religious values, beliefs that give people comfort in adversity. What comfort can the unbeliever have? *Good understanding giveth favour: but the way of transgressors is hard.* Life has not been made easier despite the many attempts to simplify it. The reason is this, that what makes life bearable is the knowledge of God and what makes it hard and unhappy is transgression. To transgress means to step across a boundary. When you step outside of the way of God you are on a hard road.

Pro 13:17 Whoever delivers your message can make things better or worse for you.

You may remember Henry Kissinger who served as National Security Advisor and Secretary of State under President Richard Nixon and continued as Secretary of State under Nixon's successor Gerald Ford? He was famous as an ambassador for the US and did much in his day to try and make the world a safer place to live in.

H.W. Fowler wrote, "The happy phrase that an Ambassador is an honest man sent to lie abroad for the good of his country". Ambassadors are chosen to be representatives of a head of state. They stand in for him to represent interests and policy.

It must be quite a difficult task to choose a person who will represent your country. What characteristics would you look for in making that choice? Well they must be able to deliver a message. They should also be wise. *2Sa 16:23 And the counsel of Ahithophel, which he counselled in those days, was as if a man had enquired at the oracle of God: so was all the counsel of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom.*

By whom and how would you like to be represented? It depends I suppose upon how you wish to be seen? That choice can as the Proverb says make things better or worse for you. It can also cause national embarrassment. John Prescott MP (Labour) describing the President of our most powerful ally as 'crap'. George Bush was ridiculing of journalist Peter Wallsten for having the temerity to ask him a question at a press conference wearing sunglasses, although Mr Wallsten has Stargardt's Disease and is legally blind. Mr Bush had to apologise.

Ken Livingstone (ex Mayor of London) suggested Trevor Phillips the black chairman of the Campaign for Racial Equality should join the British National Party and advised the Indian-born businessmen of Baghdadi Jewish descent, David and Simon Reuben, to 'go back to Iran and see if they can do better under the Ayatollahs'.

Such remarks may seem funny but they show a lack of sense and sensitivity. Maybe George Bush is "crap" but its not the thing that you say in public. Ambassadors should have sensitivity on their list or diplomacy. The original Greek word diploma from which it comes just meant something that had been folded in two (it is a distant relative of our word double). It was also a letter or writing usually under seal and signed by competent authority conferring some power, privilege or honour.

Our big challenge is I suppose how effectively we represent Christ? *2Co 5:20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ*, I am sure that we are all in need of diplomacy and ambassadorial skills. I close by an example in the news recently. How well do you think that this represents Christ and the Gospel?

Pastor Benny Hinn in Nigerian money row By Sola Odunfa BBC Focus on Africa magazine:

Benny Hinn is one of the most successful Telly evangelists in the US. In late April (2005) scores of giant billboards and thousands of wall posters all over Lagos proclaimed the first of three days of divine miracles and healing for at least six million Nigerians - but at the end of the third day there was more bickering over money than praise to God for mercy received.

The vehicle of the expected wonders of the Holy Spirit was the United States-based evangelist Benny Hinn who flew into Nigeria in a Gulfstream private jet with a large retinue that included his bodyguards. He was received at Lagos airport in a motorcade of Hummer jeeps and other expensive cars. The deaf would hear, the blind would see, the

lame would jump and walk, barren women would conceive, the jobless would gain employment and the enemy - both seen and unseen - would be vanquished. Mention any problem - physical, spiritual, economic - Hinn had come with the instant solution.

But things did not go well, for example expenditure. About 300,000 people attended the event each night - a modest congregation by Nigerian crusade standards. It is estimated that about 1 million worshippers attend the monthly Holy Ghost Congress service organised by The Redeemed Christian Church God (RCCG) at the same venue. Whatever disappointment he felt on the first and second days of the miracle crusade Hinn kept to himself - but he opened up with anger on the final day. "Four million dollars down the drain," he shouted into the microphone from the huge rostrum.

He said that he had been assured by the local organising committee that at least six million people would attend the crusade but the total turnout was only around one million. As a result he realised that all the mega public address equipment he had flown in from the US was not needed. He also complained about some claimed expenditures, the charges imposed on pastors who attended his day-time seminar, and journalists who sought to cover the crusade.

He then announced publicly that he would not provide any more funds and that the local organisers should pay all outstanding bills from the collections they made on the first two days. Hinn's complaints instantly overshadowed the spiritual context of the event. Some people from the congregation came out to declare that they received healing and other miracles after the prayers but they were hardly audible.

The Nigerian head of the local organising committee Bishop Joseph Olanrewaju Obembe, accused other Nigerian Pentecostal preachers of sabotaging the crusade and peddling false information to Hinn and his aides out of envy and to discredit him. Soon after the crusade a committee was set up by the leadership of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) - the umbrella body of Pentecostal churches nationwide - to investigate the funding controversy.

The Pentecostal faith in Nigeria is a veritable goldmine judging by the opulence of most of its pastors. It is made even more attractive because incomes of churches are tax-exempt. Nearly all the churches are the private property of their pastors or founders and their immediate families.

In an economic environment in which the majority of Nigeria's estimated 130 million population has been impoverished by unemployment, lack of basic social infrastructure and rising inflation, the church has become the last refuge for many people.

The favoured churches are the new-generation Pentecostal Assemblies that are owned and managed solely by fast-talking American-style pastors. Christianity is growing rapidly in Nigeria.

Rich and powerful Nigerians run after the pastors for "spiritual protection" from imaginary 'enemies' who they are convinced are lurking around the corner to pull them down. These are the big spenders in the churches. The attraction perhaps lies in the often-quoted Biblical injunction that "givers never lack" and the fact is that most pastors don't ask the donors how they make the money they give. See also <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/4619733.stm>

In March 2003 a cashier at a five-star hotel was arrested for allegedly stealing nearly 40 million naira (then about US\$400,000) from his employer. His colleagues were shocked because there was nothing to suggest that he was living above his means, he had no car and he lived in a rented flat in a non-fashionable part of Lagos. The man confessed that he gave all the money to his Pentecostal church in cash and equipment.

In another case a bank clerk stole 40 million naira from his employer and gave 10 million to his church as 'seed money' in the belief that the seed would germinate and yield several fold as promised by his pastor. Many Nigerians believe that a large number of pastors are honest and devoted to the service of God and mankind. But they readily take umbrage under the Yoruba (an ethnic group in Nigeria) saying that "only God knows who serves Him truly."

Pro 13:18 All who refuse correction will be poor and disgraced

Pro 13:18 All who refuse correction will be poor and disgraced; all who accept correction will be praised.

I was quite ashamed to read this week that John Prescott MP was sent to Armenia on diplomatic mission aimed at defusing Armenia's political crisis. This is the John Prescott who punched a man who threw an egg at him, had an affair with his secretary on the tax payer's budget and wanted us to use public transport while he ran two Jaguars. This man is a disgrace but it sums up the hypocrisy of our day and age.

It has been said that "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." With all the lessons of history so readily available why is it that we do not learn lessons.

In 2005 another "potty" government idea was to bring in 24 hour licensing laws. Ms Jowell (culture secretary sic!) insisted that the new laws will promote sensible drinking and lead to a more civilised atmosphere at night in major towns and cities. 3 years later those who warned about binge drinking are counting the birds coming home to roost.

World War I was a war without parallel - all previous wars were eclipsed by its scale of destruction. It was a struggle between Europe's great powers which were grouped into two hostile alliances. The number of men mobilised by both sides totalled over 65 million. When the fighting was finally over no-one could tell exactly how many had been killed but historians estimate that up to 10 million men

lost their lives on the battlefield and another 20 million were wounded. It was called the war to end all wars but no one learned the lesson.

Learning lessons is hard because our fallen nature resists it. *Isa 53:6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way.* We would sooner find out what does and does not work from our own experience rather than learning from our tutors. In Israel, unwillingness to be corrected led to a death sentence. *Deu 21:18 If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them: Deu 21:19 Then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place; Deu 21:20 And they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard. Deu 21:21 And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear.*

Some wealthy Roman parents would employ an educated slave called a pedagogue to teach their sons. The pedagogue would also take the boy to school and carried a stick to beat him with if he was naughty or did not work hard. God does the same to His sons. *Heb 12:7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons;.... 1Co 11:31 For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.*

For the Christian learning lessons is part of life. Discipline is essential for order in society but one of the things that governments have done over the past 20 years is to take those responsibilities away from parents. We wonder why we have a problem! The very people who bring those laws in fail to discipline themselves and they are shaping society in their image.

What will be the outcome? Poverty and disgrace!

Pro 13:20 He that walketh with wise men shall be wise

Pro 13:20 He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.

This small passage has about as much to say on the subject of successful living as anything ever written. In many countries a day celebrates foolishness (April 1st) and it usually involves testing a person's credulity for example, asking for striped paint, a long wait, a left handed screwdriver, a glass hammer or some other nonexistent item. On the 1st April 1957 the BBC Panorama programme did a spoof documentary on spaghetti farmers harvesting their annual crop in Switzerland. Many people believed it and the BBC had hundreds of calls asking how to grow their own spaghetti trees. Apparently the BBC replied that they should plant a sprig of spaghetti in a tin of tomato sauce and hope for the best. *Pro 14:15 The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going.*

Foolish people are people who lack knowledge and wisdom and here there is a word about separation. None of us are ever wise to make close associations with people who are foolish: Foolish in attitude, Foolish in actions or Foolish in faith - the fool hath said in his heart there is no God. Many

people's greatest downfall is that they refused to see the damaging effects their poor choice of friends had on them. They were not being helped by their friendships and neither were they helping their friends.

Listen to what this verse says. Fools will hurt you. Do not make any close relations with fools. Yes we often work with fools but that doesn't mean that we invite them to dinner or socialise with them. This implies that:

- I have the discernment to see who is wise.
- I have the character such that the wise would want to walk with me.
- I have the discipline to walk with them.

Fools are not necessarily unsuccessful in life. They may be rich. *Luk 12:16 And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully.* This begs the question as to what being rich to God is but it certainly was not the acquisition of wealth for self. It shows that you can pass through life without the slightest idea as to what life is about. Stephen Hawking has spent his life trying to explain the origin of the Universe without success and in all that time has totally missed the point as to what it is about. He has explained singularities in quantum physics but missed the singularity of God.

1Co 3:18 Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. 1Co 3:19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.

Walking is exercise. It requires energy and stamina. It will not happen accidentally. There is purpose here. There are choices being made. Wise men walk with wise men. The wise men sought Him and wise men walk with Him. The wisest men walk with Jesus Christ.

Pro 13:22 A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children

Pro 13:22 A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children: and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just.

This is a word to grandparents. Did your grandparents ever show any real concern or interest in your future? Well, if they didn't according to this verse they were not good people. They had no vision or concern for your longer-term welfare. It doesn't mean that they were nasty people, they probably were quite kind but it stopped in the present.

When we think of inheritance our thoughts naturally turn to human wealth. *Pro 19:14 House and riches are the inheritance of fathers: and a prudent wife is from the LORD.* It is of little profit to gain the world and lose your soul. Did your grandparents have any concern for your eternal soul? There is a story of a mother who left her son her Bible. He wasn't a Christian and he never opened it for years and years. Later in life he came to a crisis and opened the Bible. In between the pages was the money his mother left to him. If that earthly inheritance is not inter-weaved with the heavenly it is worthless.

I think that Timothy had a lot of input from his grandmother Lois. *2Ti 3:15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 2Ti 1:5 When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.* Timothy came from a mixed marriage, his mother had married outside of the faith which must have disappointed Lois, the grandmother. *Act 16:1 Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek:*

Timothy was clearly not fully brought up in the Jewish faith, he wasn't circumcised. *Act 16:3 Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek.* Lois and her daughter Eunice must have eventually converted to Christianity but I think that it was probably the grandmother who had the major input into the boy's life. What an inheritance!

There must be millions of souls in torment because they were not given that inheritance of faith. How many grandparents will scour the heavenly city in vain looking for their grandchildren who fail to arrive? It will certainly seem important then. When you weigh up the fact that you were quite happy to give birthday presents, gifts and even a portion of your will but that you neglected to feed that soul you might well ask what good did you really do?

The Lord gave Israel an inheritance in the land of Canaan but it did not stop there. That inheritance was promised to Abraham years before. *Heb 11:8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. Heb 11:9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: Heb 11:10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Heb 11:11 Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.* But God had cast Abraham's gaze beyond this life. *Gen 15:1 After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.*

Gen 15:5 And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. Now this was not simply his earthly children to come, it was far more specific, it was Christ. *Gal 3:16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.* That is why he looked beyond this life.

1Pe 1:4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Remember the priorities of inheritance.

You may collect an earthly inheritance but don't forget the one "reserved".

Pro 13:23 Much food is in the tillage of the poor

Pro 13:23 Much food is in the tillage of the poor: but there is that is destroyed for want of judgment.... Pro 13:23 Even when the land of the poor produces good crops, they get cheated out of what they grow. CEV

One of the things that you will notice about the Bible is that it is full of economic content, so much so that the writer Gary North has written an economic commentary on the Older Testament. Let me quote his position:

The Bible mandates free market capitalism. It is anti-socialist. The essence of democratic socialism is this re-written version of God's commandment: "Thou shalt not steal, except by majority vote." "Economic democracy" is the system whereby two wolves and a sheep vote on what to have for dinner. Christian socialists and defenders of economic planning by state bureaucrats deeply resent this interpretation of their ethical position. They resent it because its accurate. When Christianity adheres to the judicial specifics of the Bible, it produces free market capitalism.

On the other hand, when Christianity rejects the judicial specifics of the Bible, it produces socialism or some politically run hybrid "middle way" between capitalism and socialism, where politicians and bureaucrats make the big decisions about how people's wealth will be allocated. Economic growth then slows or is reversed always.

Free market capitalism produces long-term economic growth. Socialism and middle-way economic interventionism by the state produce poverty and bureaucracy. If your goal is to keep poor people poor, generation after generation, you should promote socialism. But be sure to call it economic democracy in order to fool the voters.

In our verse today we are looking at cheating the farmers. Of course we try not to cheat our own farmers but farmers in other countries. The third or undeveloped world is kept in its place by globalisation which is a bit like a mugger giving himself a pat on the back for not killing you during the robbery, merely beating you and sending you to the emergency room instead.

The Ivory Coast is the world's largest cocoa producer providing 43% of the world's cocoa. And yet in 2001 the U.S. State Department reported child slavery on many cocoa farms in the Ivory Coast. A 2002 report from the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture about cocoa farms in the Ivory Coast and other African countries estimated there were 284,000 children working on cocoa farms in hazardous conditions. U.S. chocolate manufacturers have claimed they are not responsible for the conditions on cocoa plantations since they don't own them.

In July 2005, International Labour Rights Fund filed suit against Nestlé in Federal District Court on behalf of a class of children who were trafficked from Mali into the Ivory Coast and forced to work twelve to fourteen hours a day with no pay, little food and sleep and frequent beatings. What was Nestlé's response to court questioning? "We are only buyers of a product."

In late 2005, Nestle, released its own Fairtrade coffee: Partners' Blend. The company is already subject to an international boycott for selling powdered baby milk in less developed countries. Now after years of saying Fairtrade was bad for the industry Nestle admits that it was market forces that have changed its mind.

It is estimated that Fair Trade chocolate represents less than 1% of the world's roughly \$60 billion chocolate market. According to the Chocolate Manufacturers Association and National Confectioners Association in 2005 more than 36 million heart-shaped boxes of chocolate were sold for Valentine's Day. How many hours of exploited child labour went into those boxes of chocolate?

Coffee is the world's second most valuable commodity after oil. Like many commodities it comes from the third world.

Product	Fair Trade Minimum Price (per lb)		Fair Trade Premium (per lb)
	Non-Organic	Organic	
Cashews	\$2.48	\$2.68	10 cents
Cocoa Beans	73 cents	89 cents	9 cents
Coffee (Arabica)	\$1.21	\$1.36	5 cents
Dried Fruit (Banana)*		\$1.37	30 cents
Dried Fruit (Pineapple)*		\$4.75	34 cents
Dried Fruit (Mango)*		\$3.20	32 cents

Now are the poor getting cheated? Is fair trade really a guilt offering or a charity donation via the purchase? Is it necessary? Free trade would suggest that the coffee and cocoa producers are getting the market rate which happens to be low. But there are issues with Fairtrade. For one thing its a major brand. And as the Adam Smith Institute points out Fairtrade's rapid growth and the labelling of towns across the country as 'Fairtrade' towns means that other ethical 'brands' with different approaches are squeezed out. Not everyone agrees with Fairtrade's promotion of farming co-operatives for example, which some argue are more inefficient and prevent people from developing beyond basic agriculture.

The core problem is that in the end Fairtrade comes down to hand-outs. The point of a free market when its allowed to function is that the pricing mechanism shows people where there's a need and therefore a profitable opportunity to be fulfilled. Oil prices rise and we go and dig for more oil or find a substitute. Food prices rise and we grow more food. Coffee prices keep collapsing and you find a better industry to work in. No country has ever become a successful economy by being a farm, they need to industrialise.

What really makes these third world countries poor is the tilted playing field.

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is a system of European Union agricultural subsidies and programmes. It represents about 44% of the EU's budget (€43 billion scheduled spending for 2005). When the United Kingdom joined the European Community in 1973 we accepted the existing Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), a policy which we had played no part in shaping. The aim of the CAP, a policy devised in the 1960s but only fully implemented in 1970, was to create a single market in agricultural produce in the EC. It also gave preference to EC produce over that from other countries with no barriers to trade in agricultural produce between Member States.

The CAP not only led to overproduction, it was also expensive. By 1984, 70 per cent of the EC budget was spent on agriculture and quotas on milk production had to be introduced. The CAP guarantees a minimum price to producers, imposes import tariffs and quotas on certain goods from outside the EU and provides a direct subsidy payment for cultivated land. Reforms of the system are currently underway, including a phased transfer of subsidy to land stewardship rather than specific crop production from 2005 to 2012. Detailed implementation of the scheme varies in different member countries of the EU, but a Single Payment Scheme for direct farm payments is being introduced in the UK. Direct payments are now made:

Agricultural export subsidies

Export subsidies lead to first-world farmers' produce being dumped on the Third World with ruinous consequences for local producers. The UK has argued for their abolition by 2010, but some EU members turned up to the 2005 Hong Kong trade summit determined to protect their farmers by avoiding any end date. The compromise reached was for an end date of 2013.

There was a commitment to end cotton export subsidies by 2006 and also to grant duty-free and quota-free access to LDC cotton from the date of implementation. But the big issue on cotton is the \$4 billion a year in trade-distorting domestic subsidies received by American producers that denies a level-playing field to West African producers. On this the Americans refused concessions other than to launch discussions with the most-affected countries.

- Export subsidies to EU farmers are destroying local small scale milk-producers in Jamaica.
- American cotton farmers receive \$4 billion a year in largely illegal subsidies, destroying highly efficient but desperately poor cotton farmers in West Africa.

Global cheats like Europe and America and lately China, serve their own interests. They were around in Bible times. Ahab will always be out to steal Naboth's vineyard. But next time you get a warm feeling by buying "Fair Trade", remind yourself that you are not tackling the root issue.

Pro 13:23 Even when the land of the poor produces good crops, they get cheated out of what they grow.

Footnote 2014: Sales of Fairtrade-certified products from Uganda and Ethiopia are not benefiting poor farm workers as profits fail to trickle down to much of the workforce, says a groundbreaking

study. The Fairtrade Foundation is committed to "better prices, decent working conditions, local sustainability and fair terms of trade for farmers and workers in the developing world". But a UK government-sponsored study, which investigated the production of flowers, coffee and tea in Ethiopia and Uganda, found that "where Fairtrade flowers were grown, and where there were farmers' groups selling coffee and tea into Fairtrade certified markets, wages were very low".

<http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2014/may/24/fairtrade-accused-of-failing-africas-poor>

Pro 14:1 A woman's family is held together by her wisdom

Pro 14:1 A woman's family is held together by her wisdom, but it can be destroyed by her foolishness.

CEV Pro 14:1 Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands.

AV

Karen Matthews mother of the abducted Shannon was described thus by a former "partner". "Its a terrible thing to say but she really was a complete slob - no example for any of those kids, unless you happen to see Harry Enfield's "Waynetta Slob" as a role model". What better illustration of the second part of this proverb?

Women so often look to take upon them man's role but they have been equipped for their own role. Strange that very few men want to take on the woman's role?

The first part of the verse focuses on the wise woman. Man may be the head of the house by Divine order but it is the woman who builds and holds it together. If there were any doubt about this go to the end of Proverbs (Chapter 31) and read the litany of activities the wife undertakes.

When marriages break up its usually the mother who takes the responsibility for the children. Figures estimated that in 2000 there were 1.75 million one-parent families and that almost 2.9 million, or 26 per cent, of children aged under 19 live in a one-parent family. Lone mother families rose between 1996 and 2000 to 23 per cent of all families, while lone father families increased to 3 per cent. Two-parent families fell over the same period from 79 to 74 per cent of all families.

Men are not natural home-makers. Its not in their design parameters. In order to fulfil his role as ruler over creation he needed a counterpart (help meet). *Gen 2:18 The LORD God said, "It isn't good for the man to live alone. I need to make a suitable partner for him."* The male of our species is not complete or competent to do everything! Someone once said that "The most important thing a father can do for his children is to love their mother".

The man may rule his house. *1Ti 3:4 One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;* But the woman builds or repairs it. I have also noticed that when a male in a family dies it seldom affects the family connections but when a woman dies they are often completely severed. Women are good at keeping families together. It is in the maternal nature.

In a recent experiment M.R.I. scans were taken as each mother watched videos of babies including her own with the sound off. When a woman saw images of her own child smiling or upset, her brain

patterns were markedly different than when she watched the other children. There was a particularly pronounced change in brain activity when a mother was shown images of her child in distress. The scans suggest that particular circuits in the brain are activated when a mother distinguishes the smiles and cries of her own baby from those of other infants. Solomon knew this and used it in his judgements. *1Ki 3:26 Then spake the woman whose the living child was unto the king, for her bowels yearned upon her son.*

That caring side of a woman requires divine wisdom to guide these feelings. When the instinct runs riot it can develop spoilt monsters. There is a fine line here that separates the building and demolition.

Pro 14:2 By living right, you show that you respect the LORD

Pro 14:2 By living right, you show that you respect the LORD; by being deceitful, you show that you despise him. CEV..... Pro 14:2 He that walketh in his uprightness feareth the LORD: but he that is perverse in his ways despiseth him. AV.

One of the modern forms of deceit is self-deceit. Not content with deceiving others we now turn to deceiving ourselves as an excuse for deceiving others. This is despising God.

What would you call a man with infinite wealth and gutter tastes? A man of 65 said to be worth £730 million who thinks nothing of blowing £27,000 in a single night to fly a troupe of prostitutes all the way to Monaco for a rampant orgy? With himself as the star of it naturally, most of us would probably sum him up as a grubby old goat, well past his sell-by date, who deserves nothing more than derision and contempt from all who have the misfortune to know him. But this is not how Lord Laidlaw of Rothiemay sees himself (Boris Johnson's backer). Faced with exposure of his sexual kinks, the Tory peer comes out with his hands up his explanation at the ready: he is, he pleads, a "sex addict". What is an addiction? Webster's Dictionary, "to surrender oneself to something obsessively or habitually."

Well, he could deny it or excuse it and he chooses the latter. A way around denial is to admit to something that demands pity because it is beyond your control. Michael Douglas "suffers" from this. It is a "disease" he has been fighting all his life, six weeks of "therapy" await him and just to prove what a harmless old sweetie he really is, he is donating £1 million to an addiction society" to help fellow "sufferers".

The moment a person introduces the language of sickness and pathology they are abdicating any semblance of personal responsibility. 'Addiction' is a permit to do anything they enjoy to any excess, regardless of harm to self or anyone else with unabashed impunity.

What other addictions do we excuse? Shopping, clothes or shoes, gambling, food like chocolate or danger. When adventurer Steve Fossett ('addicted' to danger they called him) dumped himself and his 'plane somewhere still undiscovered in the Nevada desert, he left a wife who has just had to petition to have him declared dead. When Steve Irwin ('addicted' to risk, we heard) met his watery

death at the wrong end of a stingray, he left his family devastated. 28-year-old Graham Calvert who was 'addicted' to gambling, lost a £2.1 million fortune.

Whether you have a problem with the zip on your trousers or the zip on your wallet its not excusable by calling it an addiction, it is sin. It is slavery to vice. *Tit 2:3 The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things;* The Christian is advised that the flesh cries out for satisfaction and he is warned to abstain. *1Pe 2:11 Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;*

We don't like to admit to being wrong so we deceive ourselves by excuses. The first step to any remedy is to admit that you have a problem and fight back - war. Addicts often admit an addiction but deceive themselves that it is a problem.

Heb 3:13 But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Pro 14:4 Without the help of an ox there can be no crop

Pro 14:4 Without the help of an ox there can be no crop, but with a strong ox a big crop is possible.

Wealth has long been associated with cattle. The word pecunia (money) is derived from pecus (cattle), the word 'fee' comes from an Anglo Saxon word for cattle. In Old Norse the word for plough was also the word for money. Wealth was very much associated with agriculture and very early on in the history of the world men were finding ways to increase productivity which meant in turn more money.

Within a short period from creation, the generations of man were developing technology and among these implements would have been the ox drawn plough. *Gen 4:20 And Adah bare Jabal: he was the father of such as dwell in tents, and of such as have cattle. Gen 4:21 And his brother's name was Jubal: he was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ. Gen 4:22 And Zillah, she also bare Tubalcain, an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron: and the sister of Tubalcain was Naamah.*

Great civilisations grew up on the back of this agricultural wealth. Egypt, for example, could feed nations from its agriculture. (See the time of Joseph. *Gen 41*) Cattle and wheat were interchangeable. Such abundance meant that people could be freed from menial labour to pursue other skills, the arts, crafts etc.

In this ancient world the Ox became the engine, the tractor for farming. It was viewed and treated with respect. *Deu 25:4 Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn.* It was highly valued *Exo 22:1 If a man shall steal an ox, or a sheep, and kill it, or sell it; he shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep.* And it is no surprise that it became an object of worship. *Exo 32:4 after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.*

It must have been a fairly common proverb that with a strong ox big crops were sustainable. The Ox was ideally created for this sustainable role. "He is long-lived (20 years) and was scarcely liable to any diseases. He is steady and always pulls fair in his gears. He lives, fattens and maintains his strength on what a horse will not eat and therefore is supported on one third the cost. His manure is more profitable. When he is worn out in his labour his flesh is good for the nourishment of man, his horns of great utility, and his hide almost invaluable".

There is a relationship between food production and social growth. Modern civilisations require more food, greater mechanisation and consequentially unsustainable resources are being used up. When we have used our fossil resources will we again revert to the ox? If you want to be a survivor in the future learn something of agriculture.

I read a sad story from Africa (Namibia) the other day. It explains a common mentality that blights farming. Three former commercial farms are now being used for subsistence farming and make no contribution to the national economy, a study on resettlement farms has found. The Roman Catholic Church donated nine cattle to them to breed with but the resettled people sold them for alcohol before breeding could even start. Agriculture requires vision. It is not an easy life but it is rewarding.

Psa 126:5 They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.

Pro 14:5 An honest witness tells the truth

Pro 14:5 An honest witness tells the truth; a dishonest witness tells nothing but lies. CEV

This proverb is about handling the truth. *Exo 20:16 Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour. Mat 15:19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:*

In mythology the river Lethe was one of the 5 rivers separating Hades from the living. It meant the river of forgetfulness because once drunk the past could no longer be remembered. The Greek word for truth is related to this. Christ is the highest representation of truth. When we seek out truth we seek to establish facts that are immovable. One of the great motivations for many scientists was that in exploring creation they were exploring the handiwork of God. To do so they developed a scientific method.

In times past men had tried to explain what they saw going on in the world around them without testing their ideas. We call this speculation. You may laugh at these now but there was a time when these ideas were taken very seriously.

Another example is the phlogiston theory (from the Ancient Greek φλογιστόν *phlōgistón*, "burning up," from φλόξ *phlóx* "fire"), first stated in 1667 by Johann Joachim Becher. It is an obsolete scientific theory that posited the existence of, in addition to the classical four elements of the Greeks, an additional fire-like element called "phlogiston" that was contained within combustible

bodies and released during combustion. The theory was an attempt to explain oxidation processes such as combustion and the rusting of metals.

Were these early observers liars? Well, the passage talks about a false witness or observer. The question has to be asked did you report exactly what you saw? Did you see the flies spontaneously generate from the meat? No. You saw flies on the meat but you never saw them appear. You are therefore a false witness...a liar. This is where science began to develop with detailed observation, repeated observation and controlled experiments. What did you witness?

Back-from-the-dead canoeist John Darwin was charged with two counts of deception being accused of making a false statement to get a passport and obtaining money by deception in relation to a life insurance policy. Was his offence any different to his past namesake Charles Darwin?

The theory of evolution as outlined in Darwin's *Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* suggests that complex life can arise by means of small variations over a period of time. For example he cites:

"In North America the black bear was seen by Hearne swimming for hours with widely open mouth, thus catching, like a whale, insects in the water. Even in so extreme a case as this, if the supply of insects were constant, and if better adapted competitors did not already exist in the country, I can see no difficulty in a race of bears being rendered, by natural selection, more and more aquatic in their structure and habits, with larger and larger mouths, till a creature was produced as monstrous as a whale."

No one had observed this so it was not a truth merely a speculation. In fact Darwin goes so far as to admit that he has no idea how it could happen because there was total ignorance on the mechanisms of inheritance.

"The laws governing inheritance are quite unknown; no one can say why the same peculiarity in different individuals of the same species, and in individuals of different species, is sometimes inherited and sometimes not so"

Chromosomes and genes were unknown to Darwin and Gregor Mendel was still formulating laws of inheritance, Darwin had made observations but he had also drawn conclusions from them that he could not test. When he said: "If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed, which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break down. But I can find out no such case." He had not anticipated modern biology. Michael Behe has answered this challenge in his book "*Darwin's Black Box*".

So was Darwin a liar? In so far as he postulated outcomes without observation, yes. He did not apply rigorous scientific methods.

There is a lesson here about how we do things in life and it is how much of that which forms our views is based upon fact or truth and how much upon hearsay and speculation? Speculation may be the first step along the road to a discovery but it must be established if it is ever to become truth.

Pro 14:10 No one else can really know how sad or happy you are.

Pro 14:10 The heart knoweth his own bitterness; and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy.

God has designed us such that even without language we can express to a degree our emotions or feelings. For example how would you express: joy, sorrow, doubt, anger, horror, happiness?

With the addition of words, we can to a degree, refine our expressions....I am happy because...I am angry because.... That though is still inadequate to enable the depths of feelings to be understood. How many times did you say as a teenager, "you don't understand me?"

The ultimate solitude of each person's soul at all times cannot be understood by man. *1Sa 1:10 And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the LORD, and wept sore.*

Nebuchadnezzar was a ruler plagued with nightmares. He couldn't understand them so he called his wise men in to interpret them. What he did not do though was to tell them the dream. The task that they had was firstly to find out what the dreams were and then what they meant. (Daniel 2).

The story shows that men have limits but God does not. *Dan 2:27 Daniel answered: Your Majesty, not even the smartest person in all the world can do what you are demanding. Dan 2:28 But the God who rules from heaven can explain mysteries. And while you were sleeping, he showed you what will happen in the future.CEV.*

It is also true that we do not even understand our own hearts. *Jer 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?* "Scamming" is a symptom of this self-deceit. Its in the news every week and it is huge business to the tune of £3.5bn a year with more than three million people who are sending money off to such scammers. People will believe anything because they are led away by their own deceit (and often greed).

Have you ever wondered how God copes with the sorrows of mankind? *Psa 44:21 Shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart.* Upon Him are the continual cries of the world, the miseries and the deprivations. Does He have sympathy for the foolish, the stupid and the wicked? Surely, it must be balanced against the knowledge that in the depths of these souls is hatred to His son.

We like to be in a state of denial and that is why we do not readily accept the gospel. We think that we are not as bad as the Christians say that we are. There is only one answer we need to get God to hold a mirror to our soul, to show us ourselves.

Psa 139:23 Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: Psa 139:24 And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. When God looked at Joshua the High priest, he was in filthy rags. *Zec 3:3 Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel.*

No one else can really know how sad or happy you are.....except God. If you have problems never expect a perfect solution by consulting another human. They have the same problem.

Pro 14:12 There is a way which seemeth right unto a man

Pro 14:12 There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

In this verse we are given a reason for false religion. We are generally incapable of making good decisions and we follow "ways" which seem to be right. How often do you hear people talking of their beliefs as, "I think that...", without a shred of evidence? So often we see Christianity displayed as exclusive and unfair because surely there must be a place for other faiths. It is not Christianity that is wrong it is men's choices.

I read today (June 2008) that an Anglican church has held a homosexual "wedding" for the first time, in a move that will deepen the rift between liberals and traditionalists. Although some liberal clergy have carried out "blessing ceremonies" for homosexual couples in the past, this is the first time a vicar has performed a "wedding ceremony" using a traditional marriage liturgy with readings, hymns and a Eucharist. The service was held at St Bartholomew the Great in London (one of England's oldest churches which featured in the film "Four Weddings and a Funeral") and was conducted by the parish rector, the Rev Martin Dudley.

The couple, the Rev Peter Cowell who is a cleric at one of the Queen's churches and the Rev Dr David Lord, had registered their civil partnership before the ceremony. The Most Rev Henry Orombi the Archbishop of Uganda said that the ceremony was "blasphemous." He called on Dr Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury to take decisive action if the Anglican Church were not to "disintegrate". Archbishop Orombi added: "What really shocks me is that this is happening in the Church of England that first brought the Gospel to us. there is a way that seems right to a man!!!!

Many "ways" are ones that require us to follow rules and laws to succeed. People follow them because it feels right. Celebrities are often spiritually needy. Fame and its trappings may be ultimately unsatisfying and immersing themselves in the study of an esoteric discipline can fill a sense of spiritual emptiness. The popularised Kabbalah with its red string bracelets to ward off envy and malice can be especially attractive to people in the public eye, such as Demi Moore, Ashton Kutcher, Lindsay Lohan, Britney Spears and Madonna. Listen to this quote from Tom Cruise, "When you're a Scientologist, and you drive by an accident, you know you have to do something about it, because you know you're the only one who can really help... *We are the way to happiness. We can bring peace and unite cultures.*"

Most of these popular "ways" do not admit to the human condition. *Jer 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*

In Pilgrim's Progress, there is a Pilgrim called Ignorance. He is heading towards the celestial city but on his own terms. He gets a ferryman called Vain Hope to get him across the river, which is an easier journey than Pilgrim and Hopeful's.

“so he, as the others I saw, did ascend the hill, to come up to the gate ; only he came alone; neither did any man meet him with the least encouragement. When he was come up to the gate, he looked up to the writing that was above, and then began to knock, supposing that entrance should have been quickly administered to him; but he was asked by the man that looked over the top of the gate, Whence came you? and what would you have? He answered, I have ate and drank in the presence of the King, and he has taught in our streets. Then he asked him for his certificate, that they might go in and show it to the King; so he fumbled in his bosom for one and found none. Then said they, Have you none? but the man answered never a word. So they told the King, but he would not come down to see him, but commanded the two shining ones, that conducted Christian and Hopeful to the City, to go out, and take Ignorance, and bind him hand and foot, and have him away. Then they took him up, and carried him through the air, to the door that I saw in the side of the hill, and put him in there. Then I saw that there was a way to hell, even from the gates of heaven, as well as from the City of Destruction”.

Bunyan saw that characteristic of the human soul, ignorance, as a destructive force and he personified it. Paul warns us about ignorance (Agnosticism *ἄγνοια*) and vanity. *Eph 4:17 This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Eph 4:18 Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:*

How often will men spend hours making a choice of what car to buy or what is the best TV or what is the best value for money or reading the life of celebrities yet not give a moment to find out the best way to life eternal. No, they are confident that they have the way in them....it seems right. We need a “gocompare Religions.com” web site.

Confidence, peer pressure and celebrity are popularising “ways” so why should we say our “way” is better than other “ways”? It was a question that confused people. *Joh 14:1 Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. Joh 14:2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. Joh 14:3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. Joh 14:4 And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Joh 14:5 Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Joh 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. Joh 14:7 If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.*

How can we know the way? It is because the way is a person. *Joh 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*

The person of Christ sends the Spirit of God Himself to Guide us. *Rom 8:16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:* We are like the blind man of the Bible, I once was blind but now...I SEE. The way in Christ has been lit up for us. The darkness is illuminated by the Spirit of God. *Joh 1:9 That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. This is the kindly light that leads the believer Joh 16:13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come,*

he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

If we open ourselves to the influences of God's Spirit we are not longer left to flounder under our own misguided influences.

Why don't men love the Jesus way? *Joh 3:19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.* Men have something wrong inside them that they ignore, Sin.

Pro 14:14 You harvest what you plant, whether good or bad.

Pro 14:14 The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: and a good man shall be satisfied from himself.

There is a law of life that states that there is a relationship between what we do and the outcomes of what we do, cause and effect. Hosea warned Israel that its idolatry would come back upon it multiplied. *Hos 8:7 For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind: it hath no stalk: the bud shall yield no meal: if so be it yield, the strangers shall swallow it up.*

It is a further law that shows that one seed will yield many seeds, ten, twenty, sixty times. What is sown comes back in a bigger amount. A stone thrown becomes an avalanche returning. It is not simply that what you do is done again to you, it is done again a lot more.

For example, you might see the rise of the Nazi party as a result of the punishing reparation inflicted on the Germans after the Great War. The rise of Black Nationalism and the rise of Mugabe as the result of Colonial policies by the white people who failed to integrate the blacks into the nation. "The native is to be treated as a child and denied the franchise. We must adopt a system of despotism in our relations with the barbarians of Southern Africa ... I personally prefer land to niggers." said Cecil Rhodes, Founder of "Rhodesia" (Zimbabwe) (1887). Then there is the problem of Empire and the immigration issues that we see today are the result of yester year's activities.

Many of the world problems that we face today can be traced back to seeds that were sown in the past. We may also see in our own lives that there were things that we did for which we are now paying the price.

However, there is an upside. You can plant a lot of bad seeds and you can plant a lot of good seeds. *Mat 6:19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: Mat 6:20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:*

There are others that I have known who over the years have declined in their commitment to the Lord. There was a time that if you had shown them their future, the shape of things to come they

would not have believed you. This thought led me to consider that I should be laying down, planting things in my life that will maintain and secure my current commitment into the future.

As Christians we should be making an investment in our future. We should be laying up treasure in heaven. *Mat 6:21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.* This incorruptible treasure comes from our attitude to God's kingdom. *Mat 6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

If we get our priorities in life right, if we focus on our true destiny and if we consider where our real future lies then we shall not be planting the seeds of destruction but the seeds of everlasting life.

The question that this scripture asks us is, "What are you planting?" Because what you are planting tells you where your harvest is coming from.

Pro 14:15 Don't be stupid and believe all you hear

Pro 14:15 Don't be stupid and believe all you hear; be smart and know where you are headed.

One thing you can be assured of in life, is that most people are greedy and stupid (love of money and sheep gone astray).

The Federal Trade Commission on (January 2007) fined the marketers of four weight loss pills \$25 million for making false advertising claims ranging from rapid weight loss to reducing the risk of cancer. Procter & Gamble (P&G) stand accused of making false claims for the second time this year after a provincial advertising standards agency ordered a shampoo commercial be pulled off air last week. According to the advertisement the company's Pantene Pro V shampoo makes hair ten times more resilient than normal, a claim the Zhejiang Provincial Industrial and Commercial Administration (ZPICA) have taken issue with. Four P&G products, Pantenev Pro V and Head and Shoulders shampoos, Safeguard soap and Crest toothpaste were originally challenged by Zhejiang's Ningbo Industrial and Commercial Bureau over exaggerated advertising claims. The latest allegations follow a case in 2005 when a woman in East China's Jiangxi Province sued P&G over claims their SK-II de-wrinkle cream could "make one look 12 years younger."

The Federal Trade Commission has sued the marketers of the BodyFlex System for falsely advertising that BodyFlex can help consumers lose weight fast. The BodyFlex System includes a gym bar and a breathing technique. The BodyFlex 18-minute "workout" involves several minutes of deep breathing and stretching, followed by exercises with the BodyFlex Gym Bar. The defendants have promoted BodyFlex through a heavily aired national infomercial and on the Internet at www.bodyflex.com. The defendants claim that, "in just seven days you can lose from four to 14 inches guaranteed with BodyFlex Plus."

How about this scam? We are giving out a yearly donation of US\$650,000.00 each to 100 lucky recipients every year. Kindly contact the Church Executive Secretary below for further information on the donation. And I regularly get these: Flash Budget Finance Lottery of British International Lottery Program wishes to inform you the results of the E-mail address ballot lottery program by the

British International Lottery Program held on July 12th, 2008. Your email account was selected as a winner of Five Hundred and Fifty Thousand Pounds Only. Millions of people buy lottery tickets every week. The odds of winning are 14,000,000 to 1. That means that millions of people will never win.

Because people believe something doesn't make it a fact. Again, time is said to be a great healer. Nelson Mandela is no longer a terrorist but a hero. Do you believe all that you hear? Mandela never renounced violence and had he done so he would have been released from prison in the 1980's. Yes you can forgive people but you cannot take away what they have done. David lived with the consequences of his sin. He never covered it up but publicly admitted it.

People have to face up to their crimes. Efraim Zuroff the Nazi hunter is close to finding Aribert Heim. He is accused of killing Jews using exceptionally cruel methods. According to Holocaust survivors he performed operations and amputations without anaesthetic to see how much pain his victims could endure. Injecting victims straight into the heart with petrol, water or poison was said to have been his favoured method, at Mauthausen. And when he was "bored" he apparently timed patient's deaths with a stopwatch. Aribert Heim's crimes rank among the worst of the Holocaust. If Heim is still alive, he would have just turned 94. Some may argue that it is wrong to put a frail old man on trial for alleged crimes committed more than half his lifetime ago. But Mr Zuroff is uncompromising: "The passage of time in no way diminishes the guilt of the perpetrators," he said in a previous interview with the BBC. Killers don't become righteous gentiles when they reach a certain age. And if we were to set a chronological limit on prosecutions, it would basically say you could get away with genocide."

So what can you believe? The word "history" in the Greek means to enquire or to find out by enquiry. Don't just believe all you hear but look into it. Check the facts and check the details. Here is a final lesson from Luke:

Luk 1:1 Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, Luk 1:2 Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; Luk 1:3 It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, Luk 1:4 That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.

Pro 14:19 The wicked will come crawling to those who obey God.

Pro 14:19 The evil bow before the good; and the wicked at the gates of the righteous.

One writer has called this verse "The Majesty of Righteousness". He means that people bow down before the majesty of God's righteousness. Take comfort in these words when you look at the abominations of our day and age. The wicked will come grovelling on their knees.

Why? 1Co 6:3 *Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?* We will be involved in the final judgement where as it says *Rom 14:11 For it is written, As I live,*

saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. Phi 2:10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;

There will be a time when men will realise that they have spent a lifetime in the shadow of darkness and deceit. On that day of judgement there will be many professing that they were believers. *Mat 7:23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*

There will no doubt be many who will be repentant when the truth becomes so clear but here is a truth, forgiveness has a “sell by date”. It is valid for one lifetime only. After “life” it is invalid. No amount of grovelling will change their condition. Hell, will for many souls, be a place of eternal depression....no wonder there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The Bible has many illustrations of this text being played out in life, not just the afterlife, for example, the wicked Haman, when he is discovered as the villain grovels before Queen Esther (Esther 7). It did him no good whatsoever and his evil also resulted in the extermination of his family.

Joseph foresaw the wickedness of his brothers and their subservience. *Gen 37:7 For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf.* In the process of time it came to pass *Gen 43:26 And when Joseph came home, they brought him the present which was in their hand into the house, and bowed themselves to him to the earth.*

Pharaoh illustrates our text perfectly. He typifies all of those who oppress God’s people. It often takes miracles to change people’s attitudes but that just reflects the hardness and wickedness of the human heart. At first he grovels with few words. *Exo 8:8 Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, Intreat the LORD, that he may take away the frogs from me, and from my people;* Then he grovels with words of repentance. *Exo 9:27 And Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, I have sinned this time: the LORD is righteous, and I and my people are wicked.* Finally he is brought to his knees. *Exo 11:8 And all these thy servants shall come down unto me, and bow down themselves unto me, saying, Get thee out, and all the people that follow thee: and after that I will go out.*

Ultimately everyone will come to the recognition of God’s excellence and ultimately the wicked will come crawling to those who obey God.

Pro 14:21 Its wrong to hate others

Pro 14:21 Its wrong to hate others, but God blesses everyone who is kind to the poor (needy).

Eternal Fact of Life: There is no solution to poverty. *Mat 26:11 For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always.* Jesus takes our minds back to the Older Testament. *Deu 15:11 For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land.*

Some people will be born poor to test our hearts and our godliness. *Lev 19:10 And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I am the LORD your God.* The Jew was not to behave like a locust and devour all that he had grown. He was to build into his business a margin for the poor. The poor figured on the annual balance sheet. The poor could also be helped not just by gifts but by loans. *Exo 22:25 If thou lend money to any of my people that is poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as an usurer, neither shalt thou lay upon him usury.* The rule was that the lender was not to exploit the poor.

God could have cured poverty completely at a stroke. God made the poor poor and He owns the poor. What you do to the poor you do to God. *Pro 19:17 He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.* The world has the capacity to feed all that live here but it doesn't happen. God, if I may use the term reverently uses the poor as a test of life. Often we think that we have done some good when we dump old clothes or junk that we do not want to some third world cause. How would you feel if someone gave you a second hand shirt for a Christmas present or an old second hand PC game or an old broken watch? Would you say that person loved you?

We may feel a bit better when we have given to Oxfam but kindness to the poor is not for the purpose of giving us a feel good factor. Its not about giving and shutting off. For example you would not do a good thing for the poor and then put a blindfold over your eyes to shut out the sight of the other poor...but we do. Look at this verse you do not give with your hand, you give with your eye. *Pro 22:9 He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor.* A bountiful eye, you give with your eye.

Its all about your outlook, how you look at life and what you see and what you shut off. Kindness and generosity are divine attributes. *Mat 5:45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.* God is gracious even to His enemies and he expects the same from us. *Mat 6:22 The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single (generous Moffat), thy whole body shall be full of light.* A generous eye brightens your life.

How do you know if you have a problem with this verse? *Mar 10:17 And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?* The problem is of possessiveness based on a lack of reliance upon God. *Mar 10:22 And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.*

The inability to be kind to the poor may have its root in a lack of trust in God and failure to rely on Him.

Pro 14:22 Its a mistake to make evil plans

Pro 14:22 Its a mistake to make evil plans, but you will have loyal friends if you want to do right. Pro 14:23 Hard work is worthwhile, but empty talk will make you poor.

The Protestant work ethic is often credited with helping to define the societies of Northern Europe and other countries where Protestantism was strong (for example the Scandinavian countries, northern Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America). In such societies it is regarded by many observers as one of the cornerstones of national prosperity. Such observers would say that people in countries with Protestant roots tend to be more materialistic, perfectionist, and more focused on work as compared to people in many Catholic countries (for example, Spain, Italy and France) where the people had a more relaxed attitude towards work and were less materialistic.

Work and blessings are linked. *Ecc 2:24 There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God.* However, we should also note that blessings were also associated with doing right (Deuteronomy 28). Sometimes hard work never gives the yield we expect...perhaps sin is in the way.

I am sure that all of us at some stage in life have hated our job and longed for retirement? Maybe at school you question whether it is worth working hard? What turns labour into a chore? I think that it is our attitude. It is our attitude to Christ. *Eph 6:5 Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; Eph 6:6 Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;*

So much we do is about us, what we want and with that attitude it is no wonder that thorns and thistles spring up in the way to make us discomforted. Do you ever start your day by praying about your work? Do you pray about those 8 hours at work or at school? Do you ask God to make the day of hard work “worthwhile”? Do you ask the Lord to help you solve the difficult issues? Do you ask Him to work beside you and show you things from His perspective and rejoice in His blessings?

Do you think this what the Psalmist had in mind? *Psa 126:5 They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.* The labour was preceded with tears, as Christ agonised in prayer and tears before His great labour. *Heb 12:2 who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Whatever the case, we shall have to work in this life. You younger ones will be looking at a retirement age of 68 by 2056, so with such a long working life you should be seriously looking at careers that you will enjoy rather than just falling into a job. The difference between making it a pleasure or making it a mindless chore is those few years of preparation.

Pro 14:26 In the fear of the LORD is strong confidence

Pro 14:26 In the fear of the LORD is strong confidence: and his children shall have a place of refuge.
Pro 14:27 The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.

The more religious you are the happier you are likely to be according to new research. A study of the effect of religion on quality of life claims that religious people are happier the more often they go to

church and pray. What was found was that religious people were experiencing current day rewards, rather than storing them up for the future.

The package is described in Mark's gospel. *Mar 10:29 And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, Mar 10:30 But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.* There are upsides and apparent downsides to Christianity.

One of the things that annoys me most is the abuse of the Name of God. The use of God's name as a swear word or exclamation of surprise. In doing this people are devaluing the person of God and perpetuating disrespect. We live in days of no fear of the Lord.

The verses before us are about respect because it is through respect for the Lord and through the fear of the Lord that two things come to you. Firstly you will have a refuge or a shelter and secondly we have a well of life.

Do you lack confidence in life? Are you uncertain about life? Develop the respect and fear of the Lord. How? Through learning of His works and His ways, through thanksgiving and praise and through making God the centre of your life. If there is a quality that I would see as missing in the churches today it is the fear of the Lord. There is in my opinion an over-familiarity that verges on contempt. There will be no refuge for the disrespectful.

I think that the second part of the verse describes how the refuge works. It will remove the "snares of death". The Psalmist says: *Psa 18:4 The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid. Psa 18:5 The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me.*

Do you ever get sad? You would be unusual if you didn't. The sorrows of death, the floods of the ungodly, the snares of death, it is all so depressing. It certainly is if you try to carry it yourself. Often that is just what we do.

Drinking at God's fountain of life will remove those sorrows. Like Asaph, you will make sense and get comfort from the presence of God. *Psa 73:17 Then I went to your temple, and there I understood what will happen to my enemies.*

Jas 5:13 Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. The fear of the Lord and the respectful entrance into His presence, which privilege you have in Christ will deliver you. You will have both refuge, confidence and deliverance.

Pro 14:28 Rulers of powerful nations are held in honour

Pro 14:28 Rulers of powerful nations are held in honour; rulers of weak nations are nothing at all.

Happy and numerous people, form the true glory of a king, Albert Barnes observed. The honour or the ornament of a king consists in this, that he rules over a great people and that they increase and prosper. On the other hand it is the ruin of princely greatness when the people decline in number and in wealth.

It is an interesting point of discussion. Does a great person make a great kingdom or is it the people under the King, that make the King great? Was Alexander “Great” because he was a military genius or was it because he had the backing of a great nation, the Macedonians? How could he single-handedly change the nature of the ancient world in little more than a decade? Is it possible for anyone to achieve great things without the backing of the people?

Would Spurgeon, had he lived in this generation have enjoyed the success in his ministry that he did in the 19th Century? You can visit the Metropolitan Tabernacle on a Sunday these days and it is far from full. Not I think because Peter Masters is a lesser preacher but because it is a reflection of our age. It is a reflection on the people. The ruler, the King is merely a reflection of the nation and we get the people we deserve. I am sure if Homer Simpson ran for American president he would stand a good chance of winning!

What then makes a great people? It is a people who are ordered and disciplined. The fall of the Roman Empire is attributed to this. Those morals and values that kept together the Roman legions and thus the empire could not be maintained towards the end of the empire. Crimes of violence made the streets of the larger cities unsafe. Even during Pax Romana there were 32,000 prostitutes in Rome. Emperors like Nero and Caligula became infamous for wasting money on lavish parties where guests ate and drank until they became ill. The most popular amusement was watching the gladiatorial combats in the Coliseum. These were attended by the poor, the rich and frequently the Emperor himself. As gladiators fought, vicious cries and curses were heard from the audience. One contest after another was staged in the course of a single day. Should the ground become too soaked with blood, it was covered over with a fresh layer of sand and the performance went on.

Does this seem familiar? The Bible says in the chapter we are studying, *Pro 14:34 Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.* Truly great Nations are Righteous. They are law abiding. The root problems in our Nation are not being addressed they are merely being plastered over. We have lost the values that made us Great Britain. Commenting on society today Robert Slane says the permissive society is absolutist. When it permits adultery, cohabiting, divorce and homosexuality it is not simply saying that they are morally right....it is saying, “thou shalt not commit adultery” is morally wrong. In other words while the Bible absolutely condemns sexual relations outside of marriage, Humanist society absolutely condemns the Bible for making this pronouncement! Now what do you think Gods’ attitude to people is who reject His righteousness? They become a reproach.

Pro 14:31 If you mistreat the poor, you insult your Creator

Pro 14:31 If you mistreat the poor, you insult your Creator; if you are kind to them, you show him respect. CEV. Pro 17:5 By insulting the poor, you insult your Creator. You will be punished if you make fun of someone in trouble.

I do not want to confuse the poverty that arises from sloth and idleness with the poverty that comes *commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat*. God's poor are to be treated kindly. *Lev 25:35 And if thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee; then thou shalt relieve him: yea, though he be a stranger, or a sojourner; that he may live with thee.*

In 1552 under Queen Mary 1, the Poor Law was enacted to help the less fortunate in Society. The Poor Law was the system for the provision of social security in operation in England and Wales from the 16th century until the establishment of the Welfare State in the 20th century. The dependent poor were classified in terms of three groups:

- The **impotent poor** could not look after themselves or go to work. They included the ill, the infirm, the elderly and children with no-one to properly care for them. It was generally held that they should be looked after.
- The **able-bodied poor** normally referred to those who were unable to find work either due to cyclical or long-term unemployment in the area or a lack of skills. Attempts to assist these people and move them out of this category varied over the centuries but usually consisted of relief either in the form of work or money.
- The '**vagrants**' or 'beggars', sometimes termed '**sturdy rogues**', were deemed those who could work but had refused to. Such people were seen in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as potential criminals, apt to do mischief when hired for the purpose. They were normally seen as people needing punishment and as such were often whipped in the market place as an example to others or sometimes sent to houses of correction. This group was also termed the **idle poor**.

Tudor Poor Laws aimed to deal with vagrancy were harsh towards the able bodied poor who were not trying or finding work and whippings and beatings were acceptable punishments.

The reforms of the Liberal Government 1906 to 1914 made several provisions to provide social services without the stigma of the Poor Law, including Old age pensions and National Insurance and from that period fewer people were covered by the system.

In our second Elizabethan age we have lost the distinctions between idle poor and sturdy rogues, which means that you are now charitable to both groups by your tax payments. We might also argue that we fully comply with the verse before us, nay we go even further than its provisions. What more is required of us?

Being robbed by Governments does little to develop a right attitude! In fact it may do the opposite and make us less feeling and considerate of our duties. Surely if God has such high regard for the impotent poor why doesn't He do more for them? He has given us that job.

Mat 25:31 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: Mat 25:32 And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: Mat 25:33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Mat 25:34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: Mat 25:35 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Mat 25:36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Mat 25:37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? Mat 25:38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Mat 25:39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? Mat 25:40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Mat 25:41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

The poor believer bears the image of Christ. To insult the poor is to insult Christ.

The poor man also suffers the purpose of God. *Exo 4:11 And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD?* Poverty may come about from being slothful but one can be born into it. *Pro 6:11 So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.* It may arise from wars and other situations of life where God's providence is outworked. This current (2008) recession will create many poor people.

God's poor are there for a purpose. *Deu 15:11 For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land.* If this recession makes you tighten your hand then you are already reproaching your creator.

If we give thanks for what blessings we have at our tables and in the homes, the things we say He has given us, all God asks of us in return is to be prepared to share it with the less fortunate.

Pro 15:1 A soft answer turneth away wrath

Pro 15:1 A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger. Pro 15:1 A kind answer soothes angry feelings, but harsh words stir them up. CEV

This proverb is about anger management. It is about managing your own personal anger, it is about managing the anger in someone else who is confronting you. Some experts suggest that the average adult gets angry about once a day and annoyed or peeved about three times a day. Other anger management experts suggest that getting angry fifteen times a day is more likely a realistic average.

Regardless of how often we actually experience anger it is a common and unavoidable emotion. Have you had any anger today? What was it over and why?

Anger is a divine attribute. *Mar 3:5 And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other.* We see that it was a controlled anger and was generated by the hardness of the people that He was confronting. However the anger was contained and did not result in any words or violence. It was probably expressed in the healing? If He did not get angry it would indicate a lack of concern over the issue. What makes you angry... is it something godly or not?

On another occasion Jesus exercises pre-meditated anger. *Joh 2:14 And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: Joh 2:15 And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables;*

We are not discouraged from expressing anger and it is not necessarily a sin to be angry. *Eph 4:26 Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:* It may be a problem through our response. For example footballer Didier Drogba faced a triple penalty for throwing a coin at fans. "The Chelsea striker is set to be hit by a police probe, an FA ban and a £160,000 fine. Even players' chief Gordon Taylor yesterday admitted the Chelsea star must be punished for the incident during the Carling Cup defeat by Burnley".

Quote: Anger is a basic human emotion that is experienced by all people. Typically triggered by an emotional hurt, anger is usually experienced as an unpleasant feeling that occurs when we think we have been injured, mistreated or opposed in our long-held views or when we are faced with obstacles that keep us from attaining personal goals. The instinctive natural way to express anger is to respond aggressively. Anger is a natural adaptive response to threats, it inspires powerful often aggressive, feelings and behaviours which allow us to fight and to defend ourselves when we are attacked. A certain amount of anger therefore is necessary to our survival.

The experience of anger varies widely, how often anger occurs, how intensely it is felt and how long it lasts is different for each person. People also vary in how easily they get angry (their anger threshold) as well as how comfortable they are with feeling angry. Some people are always getting angry while others seldom feel angry. Some people are very aware of their anger while others fail to recognize anger when it occurs.

There are a number of scriptures that advise on anger:

Pro 15:18 A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife. There are those who throw fuel on the fires of anger. Being in control is a means of damage control. We need reminding that getting angry is not going to fix anything, that it won't make you feel better and may actually make you feel worse.... *Pro 16:32 He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.* This is a man in control.

Pro 19:11 The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression..... Psa 130:3 If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? It is a Divine attribute to “Passover”. Sometimes we never reflect on the results of our anger. Did we achieve or change anything for the better?

Pro 21:14 A gift in secret pacifieth anger: and a reward in the bosom strong wrath. Kindness is a great appeaser. Why? I think that gifts are a way that we express affection for and the value of another human being. Probably a symptom of a fading relationship is the lack of gifting.

Ecc 7:9 Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools. Angry people tend to jump to and act on conclusions and some of those conclusions can be very inaccurate. The first thing to do if you're in a heated discussion is slow down and think through your responses. Don't say the first thing that comes into your head but slow down and think carefully about what you want to say. At the same time listen carefully to what the other person is saying and take your time before answering.

Anger is to be controlled and dealt with. *Eph 4:31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: Col 3:8 But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.*

According to the British Heart Foundation there is no evidence to say that stress causes coronary heart disease or heart attacks however if you already have coronary heart disease and experience feelings of anxiety or are under lots of stress it may bring on symptoms such as angina. Changing your lifestyle in a positive way can make you feel physically fitter and better able to cope with some of the demands on you. A balanced diet and regular physical activity will also help you cope with stress.

The verse for today though encourages us to think how we might best respond to anger. What words do we craft? What thoughts do we have? We probably spend more time thinking about how we be abusive than how we can be kind?

I have two examples of how the anger of others was managed, first the anger of the men of Ephraim, secondly the anger of David.

Jdg 8:1 And the men of Ephraim said unto him, Why hast thou served us thus, that thou calledst us not, when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites? And they did chide with him sharply. Jdg 8:2 And he said unto them, What have I done now in comparison of you? Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer? Jdg 8:3 God hath delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb: and what was I able to do in comparison of you? Then their anger was abated toward him, when he had said that.

1Sa 25:21 Now David had said, Surely in vain have I kept all that this fellow hath in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that pertained unto him: and he hath requited me evil for good. 1Sa 25:22 So and more also do God unto the enemies of David, if I leave of all that pertain to him by the morning light any that pisseth against the wall. 1Sa 25:23 And when Abigail saw David, she hasted,

and lighted off the ass, and fell before David on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, 1Sa 25:24 And fell at his feet, and said, Upon me, my lord, upon me let this iniquity be: and let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak in thine audience, and hear the words of thine handmaid. 1Sa 25:25 Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, even Nabal: for as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him: but I thine handmaid saw not the young men of my lord, whom thou didst send. 1Sa 25:26 Now therefore, my lord, as the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, seeing the LORD hath withholden thee from coming to shed blood, and from avenging thyself with thine own hand, now let thine enemies, and they that seek evil to my lord, be as Nabal. 1Sa 25:27 And now this blessing which thine handmaid hath brought unto my lord, let it even be given unto the young men that follow my lord. 1Sa 25:28 I pray thee, forgive the trespass of thine handmaid: for the LORD will certainly make my lord a sure house; because my lord fighteth the battles of the LORD, and evil hath not been found in thee all thy days. 1Sa 25:29 Yet a man is risen to pursue thee, and to seek thy soul: but the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the LORD thy God; and the souls of thine enemies, them shall he sling out, as out of the middle of a sling. 1Sa 25:30 And it shall come to pass, when the LORD shall have done to my lord according to all the good that he hath spoken concerning thee, and shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel; 1Sa 25:31 That this shall be no grief unto thee, nor offence of heart unto my lord, either that thou hast shed blood causeless, or that my lord hath avenged himself: but when the LORD shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid. 1Sa 25:32 And David said to Abigail, Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me: 1Sa 25:33 And blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand.

Anger is not wrong but it can affect our capability as Christians. *Jas 1:19 My dear friends, you should be quick to listen and slow to speak or to get angry. Jas 1:20 If you are angry, you cannot do any of the good things that God wants done.*

Pro 15:5 A fool despiseth his father's instruction

Pro 15:5 A fool despiseth his father's instruction: but he that regardeth reproof is prudent. AV Pro 15:5 Don't be a fool and disobey your parents. Be smart! Accept correction. CEV

It seems to be one of those games of life that we play by avoiding doing what we are told or if we can annoying our parents. Why do we do it? We complain that our parents “keep going on at us” but that is because we do not listen to what they say so they have to keep saying it. Then in desperation we turn on them and say “you don’t understand me, you are always picking on me, and you make my life miserable”.

It is pretty clear that if left to ourselves we will not survive. There was a tragic story in the news of a little Afghanistan girl who was given a small battery to play with and she ate it destroying her vocal chords. What have your parents stopped you from devouring? The problem is that when we are children we are by nature stupid. *Pro 22:15 Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.* We do stupid things because we are stupid.

Quotes: “I used to hide M&Ms inside the power outlet that was loose in my bedroom. I thought the electricity would keep them from melting....We had plenty of time to dare each other to drink the lead based paint from a paint by number set of the ‘Sistine Chapel’ we found in the neighbours trash..... One time, we found a humongous dog poo (Mastiff/Elephant cross?) and decided to see what would happen if a banger went off in it..... I once got lost in a cornfield. I was too short to see over the corn. Didn't know where I was. The adults kept yelling for me to make noise and stay still. I kept running around..... I once fell down a coal chute. I just wanted to see where all that coal was going.”

Now parents are there to explain these things. You could find out the answers by asking without suffering the consequences of stupidity! Most of God’s creation has the knowledge to function built in from the start. We humans are designed to acquire most of it from our parents and as the Proverb warns; *“Don't be a fool and disobey your parents”*

You have probably come through the foolish years by now. *Gal 3:25 But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.* One thing you have to learn now is that life is up to you. Its what you make of it.

I was talking to a young Croatian man on holiday and I asked him what he thought was the best thing to do in these times. He replied straight away “invest in yourself”. You should learn that you cannot now blame others for the condition of your life. You have had good upbringings which you can build upon. Don’t sit back and let others (teachers etc) manipulate your life. You can invest in yourself.

- Make Your Own Lifestyle decisions
- Put Your Family First
- Wherever You Work, Be in Business for Yourself
- Make the Most of the Money You Bring Home
- Turn Your Debts into Golden Investments
- Map Out Your Own Financial Future <http://www.goodadvicepress.com/23iiy.htm>

Pro 15:7 Words of wisdom make good sense

Pro 15:7 Words of wisdom make good sense; the thoughts of a fool make no sense at all. CEV Pro 15:7 The lips of the wise disperse knowledge: but the heart of the foolish doeth not so. AV

Obit Telegraph: Sir Alan Walters, who died on January 3 aged 82 was a Eurosceptic monetarist and the former personal economic policy adviser to Margaret Thatcher, his advice led to the resignation of her Chancellor of the Exchequer, Nigel Lawson, in 1989 an event which weakened Mrs Thatcher’s leadership and hastened her own resignation as party leader a year later.

When Mrs Thatcher became leader of the Conservative Party in 1975 Walters worked closely with her to draft policies that would put the new economics into effect in government. His prescription, control of the money supply, cuts in public expenditure and taxation, and privatisation of companies

in public ownership — later became the platform upon which Mrs Thatcher fought and won the 1979 general election.

Walters also used his position at Number 10 to scupper some of the more ambitious projects proposed by Mrs Thatcher's Cabinet colleagues. David Howell first energy secretary, then Transport Secretary often fell foul of his razor-sharp critique. Walters not only scuppered Howell's plans for a £2.7 billion gas-gathering pipeline in the North Sea but also his later proposal for a crash programme of electrification of the entire BR rail network.

In demolishing British Rail's case Walters demonstrated to Mrs Thatcher that it would be cheaper for BR to give a Rolls-Royce, a chauffeur and a lifetime's supply of petrol to all users of a certain threatened line than to keep it open. Instead of electrification he persuaded her to insist on an inquiry into the future of the rail network. The report of this inquiry, the Serpell report canvassed a number of possibilities including a massive closure programme provoking a storm of protest in Parliament.

Walters saw the limitations of policies that allowed endless credit and public ownership which is a drain on resources. Zimbabwe here we come.

Sometimes Wisdom is hard. It may even be an indicator that something is wise because it is hard!
Pro 29:15 The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.
Foolishness takes an easy path, wisdom takes an ordered path.

Here are some sayings you might find interesting!

- "Smoking kills. If you're killed, you've lost a very important part of your life." - Brooke Shields
- "Trees cause more pollution than automobiles do." - Ronald Reagan
- "We don't like their sound. Groups of guitars are on their way out." - Decca recording company executive, turning down the Beatles, 1962.
- Outside of the killings, Washington has one of the lowest crime rates in the country." - Marion Barry, Mayor of Washington, D.C.
- "I've never had major knee surgery on any part of my body." - Winston Bennett, University of Kentucky basketball forward.
- "Please provide the date of your death." - from an IRS letter.
- "The singer will have to go." - Eric Easton (then a new manager of the Rolling Stones) assessing Mick Jagger's value to the group, 1963.
- "The Holocaust was an obscene period in our nation's history - this century's history - We all lived in this century. I didn't live in this century." - Dan Quayle.

Let us learn a new word. Morologia. *Eph 5:4 Don't use dirty or foolish (morologia) or filthy words. Instead, say how thankful you are.*

The wise are people who dispense knowledge not morologia. Wisdom may be described as the dispensary of knowledge. In order to be in a position to dispense or disperse knowledge you have to acquire knowledge. The more you learn we trust the wiser you will become.

Pro 15:11 Hell and destruction are before the LORD

Pro 15:11 Hell and destruction are before the LORD: how much more then the hearts of the children of men? AV Pro 15:11 If the LORD can see everything in the world of the dead, he can see in our hearts.

The first representation of Saint Valentine appeared in the Nuremberg Chronicle (1493) alongside the woodcut portrait of Valentine. The text states that he was a Roman priest martyred during the reign of Claudius II, known as Claudius Gothicus. He was arrested and imprisoned upon being caught marrying Christian couples and otherwise aiding Christians who were at the time being persecuted by Claudius in Rome. Helping Christians at this time was considered a crime. Claudius took a liking to this prisoner until Valentinus tried to convert the Emperor, whereupon this priest was condemned to death. He was beaten with clubs and stoned, when that didn't finish him, he was beheaded outside the Flaminian Gate. Various dates are given for the martyrdom or martyrdoms: 269, 270, or 273.

Many of the current legends that characterise Saint Valentine were invented in the fourteenth century in England notably by Geoffrey Chaucer and his circle, when the feast day of February 14th first became associated with romantic love. Cupid is also associated with this.

Cupid was the son of Venus (goddess of love) and Mars (god of war) and in the Greek version he was the son of Aphrodite and was named Eros. He was often depicted with wings, a bow and a quiver of arrows. When his mother got extremely jealous of the Princess Psyche who was so loved by her subjects that they forgot to worship Venus, she ordered Cupid to make her fall in love with the ugliest and poorest man in the world. When Cupid saw Psyche though he was so overcome with her unnatural beauty that he dropped an arrow on his foot and fell in love with her himself. Cupid's power was supposed to be even greater than his mother's since he had dominion over the dead in Hades, the creatures of the sea and the gods in Olympus.

But our text tells us it is Jehovah who has this power over Hades and that the hearts of men are subject to the arrows of God. *Job 6:4 For the arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit: the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me.*

We don't just mean that God can see the physical pump, the heart in our chest but rather the whole of our being. Can you imagine what it would be like to know what people around you are thinking? I imagine that you would see the world as a much darker and nastier place to live in. *Jer 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?* Well, Jesus does. *Luk 11:17 But he, knowing their thoughts.* What must the Lord's life have been like when the souls of all men passed before Him in all their blackness? *Mar 7:20 Then Jesus said: What comes from your heart is what makes you unclean.*

The old workhouses used to have religious verses pasted on the walls. This was one of them. *Jer 12:3 But thou, O LORD, knowest me: thou hast seen me, and tried mine heart toward thee:* God is recording our lives. *Luk 12:2 For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.*

Pro 15:13 Happiness makes you smile; sorrow can crush you.

Pro 15:13 A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken.

Laugh and the world laughs with you, weep and you weep alone. People prefer cheerfulness in others. A person who is cheerful will have company but someone who is gloomy will often be alone. Do you have any miserable friends?

It has been observed that God doesn't have a sense of humour and that when He does laugh it is the laughter of derision. *Psa 2:4 He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.*

We went to the Imperial War Museum recently. There was nothing to laugh about there. We went to the Genocide exhibition and the Holocaust Exhibition which were full of crushing sorrow. We saw how much man had invested in killing his fellow man with all manner of weaponry. Yet in some way if we did not see that dark side of life how would we appreciate the lighter side?

If God does not laugh that often it does not mean that his children should not laugh. He has given us this ability that we are just beginning to understand. Research has shown health benefits of laughter ranging from strengthening the immune system to reducing food cravings to increasing one's threshold for pain. There's even an emerging therapeutic field known as humour therapy to help people heal more quickly among other things. Humour also has several important stress relieving benefits. Laughter truly is the best medicine.

Laughter connects us with others. Also laughter is contagious, so if you bring more laughter into your life you can most likely help others around you to laugh more and realize these benefits as well. By elevating the mood of those around you, you can reduce their stress levels and perhaps improve the quality of social interaction you experience with them reducing your stress level even more!

Sarah's relief at having a son was accompanied by laughter. *Gen 21:6 And Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me.* It was contagious. It is very much like sorrow and weeping that too can be shared. I went to a Chinese funeral once where this happened and it was a great leveller and stress reliever.

The people laughed with joy when they understood God's word. *Neh 8:12 And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them.* Does the WORD make you smile?

God has built into us muscles that show our feelings without words. You may have heard that we use more muscles to frown than to smile. Its not so according to a plastic surgeon. It takes 12 muscles to smile and 11 to frown. But just think of that. God took the trouble to design 12 muscles to enable us to show happiness. We could still be happy without them but we would not show it. Happiness makes you smile.

All people that on earth do dwell, sing to the Lord with cheerful voice. Him serve with mirth, His praise forth tell, come ye before Him and rejoice. The Old 100th.

Pro 15:14 Anyone with good sense is eager to learn more

Pro 15:14 Anyone with good sense is eager to learn more, but fools are hungry for foolishness.

I want to look at a practical example of this and also one of my heroes of the Faith. Michael Faraday (1791 – 1867). For me he sums up this Proverb. The young Michael Faraday one of four children having only the most basic of school educations had to largely educate himself. What times did he live in and what were the great events? At 14 (1805) he became apprenticed to a local bookbinder and bookseller George Riebau and during his 7-year apprenticeship he read many books including Isaac Watts “The Improvement of the Mind” and he enthusiastically implemented the principles and suggestions that it contained. He developed an interest in science especially in electricity. In particular he was inspired by the book Conversations in Chemistry by Jane Marcet.

At the age of 20 in 1812 at the end of his apprenticeship, Faraday attended lectures by the eminent English chemist Humphrey Davy the famous Chemist, of the Royal Institution and Royal Society and John Tatum founder of the City Philosophical Society. Many tickets for these lectures were given to Faraday by William Dance (one of the founders of the Royal Philharmonic Society). Afterwards Faraday sent Davy a three hundred page book based on notes taken during the lectures. Davy's reply was immediate, kind and favourable. When Davy damaged his eyesight in an accident with nitrogen trichloride (how dangerous is science) he decided to employ Faraday as a secretary.

When John Payne one of the Royal Institution's assistants was sacked, Sir Humphry Davy was asked to find a replacement. He appointed Faraday as Chemical Assistant at the Royal Institution on 1st March 1813.

In the class-based English society of the time, Faraday was not considered a gentleman. When Davy went on a long tour to the continent in 1813–15 his valet did not wish to go. Faraday was going as Davy's scientific assistant and was asked to act as Davy's valet until a replacement could be found in Paris. Faraday was forced to fill the role of valet as well as assistant throughout the trip. Davy's wife Jane Apreece, refused to treat Faraday as an equal (making him travel outside the coach, eat with the servants, etc.) and generally made Faraday so miserable that he contemplated returning to England alone and giving up science altogether. The trip did however give him access to the European scientific elite and a host of stimulating ideas. His sponsor and mentor was John 'Mad Jack' Fuller, who created the Fullerian Professorship of Chemistry at the Royal Institution.

Faraday's greatest work was with electricity. In 1821 soon after the Danish Chemist Hans Christian Oersted discovered the phenomenon of magnetism, Humphrey Davy and William Hyde Wollaston tried but failed to design an electric motor. Faraday having discussed the problem with the two men went on to build two devices to produce what he called electromagnetic rotation, which is a continuous circular motion from the circular magnetic force around a wire. Faraday published his results without acknowledging his debt to Wollaston and Davy and the resulting controversy caused Faraday to withdraw from electromagnetic research for several years.

Ten years later in 1831 he began his great series of experiments in which he discovered electromagnetic induction. He found that if he moved a magnet through a loop of wire an electric current flowed in the wire. The current also flowed if the loop was moved over a stationary magnet. This was the first transformer (inductor), although Faraday used it only to demonstrate the principle of electromagnetic induction and did not realise what it would eventually be used for.

His experiments established that a changing magnetic field produces an electric field. This relation was mathematically modelled by Faraday's law, which afterwards became one of the four Maxwell equations. These in turn evolved into the generalization known as field theory. Faraday then used this principle to construct the first dynamo (in the form of a copper disk rotated between the poles of a permanent magnet) the predecessor of modern dynamos and generators.

In 1832 Michael Faraday reported that the quantity of elements separated by passing an electrical current through a molten or dissolved salt was proportional to the quantity of current passed through the circuit. This became the basis of the first law of electrolysis. He also popularized terminology such as anode, cathode, electrode, and ion.

In 1845 he discovered what is now called the Faraday Effect. The plane of polarization of linearly polarized light propagated through a material medium can be rotated by the application of an external magnetic field, aligned in the propagation direction. He wrote in his notebook "I have at last succeeded in illuminating a magnetic curve or line of force and in magnetising a ray of light". This established that magnetic force and light were related.

In 1845 he also discovered the phenomenon that he named Diamagnetism - a very weak form of magnetism that is only exhibited in the presence of an external magnetic field. This phenomenon can be used for levitation.

In his work on static electricity Faraday demonstrated that the charge only resided on the exterior of a charged conductor and exterior charge had no influence on anything enclosed within a conductor. This is because the exterior charges redistribute such that the interior fields due to them cancel. This shielding effect is used in what is now known as a Faraday cage. You can sit in a cage of wire and the current of a lightning bolt will go around the cage but protect you within the cage. A motor vehicle is a Faraday cage.

Faraday also dabbled in chemistry discovering chemical substances such as benzene, inventing the system of oxidization numbers and liquefying gases.

It is suggested that Faraday's achievements among the greatest in history sprang from his religious faith. He believed that nature substantiated the existence of its Creator. Because God created the world all of its nature must be interconnected as a single whole. Electricity and magnetism must be inter-linked. Also key to his thought was the idea that objective reality must judge every theory no matter how elegant or sophisticated. He would have had fun taking Darwin to pieces!

Michael Faraday was a Christian preacher throughout his life and an elder of his church. His science was ethical and he refused to develop poison gas for the Crimean war. He also turned down honours

and a knighthood believing that Christ and the Apostles would not accept worldly honours. He had little use for people who lived worthless lives and once said that he preferred dogs to some humans because dogs at least were faithful.

To me he is the epitome of this verse, “Anyone with good sense is eager to learn more”.

Pro 15:15 The poor have a hard life

Pro 15:15 The poor have a hard life, but being content is as good as an endless feast. Pro 15:15 All the days of the afflicted are evil: but he that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast. AV

The tears of the celebrities as they confronted poverty on Comic Relief were probably tears of joy that they could turn their back on it and go back home to comfortable suburbia. What we saw was their inability to cope or understand the issues. The idea that even £60 million can make any measurable difference is absurd. These wretched individuals they see sit around waiting for handouts and we perpetuate the handout mentality. The DFID channelled £1.4billion of your tax payer’s money through the World Bank into foreign aid which clearly has achieved little especially if another bunch of comedians has to raise more. Its not the sum total of aid either! Don’t feel guilty....you have been giving.

Footnote 2014. The UK's official development assistance (ODA) is expected to rise to £11.3bn when it hits the 0.7% target. With a population of about 63 million, the figure works out at roughly £137 per Brit. The advocacy group One calculates that a person on an income of £25,000 pays £5,465 in tax of which £52 would go to the overseas aid budget a year.

Also don’t be swayed by the media manipulation of Red Nose day. If you give it is probably to make the guilt feelings go away. But did you really achieve anything? This is what VSO says: “Many UK consumers retain an essentially one-dimensional view of developing countries. The stereotypes are primarily driven by images of drought and famine in African countries - 'the Live Aid Legacy'. While these stereotypes are not completely false, they are only part of the picture. They generate and reinforce a relationship of powerful giver and helpless recipient. This relationship pigeonholes and constrains developing countries, creating the impression of a one-way, rather than two-way relationship. In turn, this limits our capacity to learn and benefit from such countries and cultures.” (Source VSO).

In Namibia this week, there was a discussion in Parliament on land reform. The Justice Minister Livula-Ithana “quipped that Zimbabwe implemented its land reform and “the *people of Zimbabwe are well off today*””. This caused rumblings from the opposition benches. “For this ‘crime’ (land reform) the EU and USA imposed sanctions on Zimbabwe,” the Minister added but she did not mention that the sanctions were imposed against certain Zimbabwean government officials and not the whole country”. So foreign sanctions against the theft of land from white farmers were OK and that sanctions were a crime. This, in a country (Namibia) where they proudly name a street after Robert Mugabe, well, would you give money to countries with that mentality?

Ebenezer Scrooge was absolutely correct. We have institutions to which we contribute. Even that is mismanaged and that is just life.

Somewhere in the middle sounds about right. *Pro 30:8 Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me:* Yes, none of us like poverty and as our verse says poor people do have a hard time of it. Yes, and there are a lot of them and soon to be a lot more.

If the poor are to be helped then pay to get rid of bad management and bad leaders who are soaking up the resources. A 2002 African regional report says that corruption is costing Africa more than \$148bn dollars a year, increasing the cost of goods by as much as 20% deterring investment and holding back development. Most of the cost it says falls on the poor. This verse is a guide to living with poverty. *1Ti 6:6 But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.*

A CHRISTMAS CAROL: This lunatic in letting Scrooge's nephew out had let two other people in. They were portly gentlemen, pleasant to behold and now stood, with their hats off, in Scrooge's office. They had books and papers in their hands and bowed to him.

"Scrooge and Marley's, I believe," said one of the gentlemen, referring to his list. "Have I the pleasure of addressing Mr. Scrooge, or Mr. Marley?"

"Mr. Marley has been dead these seven years," Scrooge replied. "He died seven years ago this very night."

"We have no doubt his liberality is well represented by his surviving partner." said the gentleman presenting his credentials.

It certainly was; for they had been two kindred spirits. At the ominous word "liberality," Scrooge frowned and shook his head and handed the credentials back.

"At this festive season of the year, Mr. Scrooge," said the gentleman, taking up a pen, "it is more than usually desirable that we should make some slight provision for the Poor and Destitute who suffer greatly at the present time. Many thousands are in want of common necessities, hundreds of thousands are in want of common comforts, sir."

"Are there no prisons?" asked Scrooge. "Plenty of prisons." said the gentleman, laying down the pen again.

"And the Union workhouses?" demanded Scrooge. "Are they still in operation?" "They are. Still." returned the gentleman. "I wish I could say they were not."

"The Treadmill and the Poor Law are in full vigour then?" said Scrooge. "Both very busy, sir."

"Oh! I was afraid from what you said at first that something had occurred to stop them in their useful course." said Scrooge. "I'm very glad to hear it."

"Under the impression that they scarcely furnish Christian cheer of mind or body to the multitude," returned the gentleman "a few of us are endeavouring to raise a fund to buy the Poor some meat and drink and means of warmth. We choose this time because it is a time of all others when Want is keenly felt and Abundance rejoices. What shall I put you down for?"

"Nothing!" Scrooge replied. "You wish to be anonymous?"

"I wish to be left alone." said Scrooge. "Since you ask me what I wish gentlemen that is my answer. I don't make merry myself at Christmas and I can't afford to make idle people merry. I help to support the establishments I have mentioned they cost enough and those who are badly off must go there."

"Many can't go there and many would rather die."

"If they would rather die," said Scrooge, "they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population."

What do you think the solution to poverty is? Institutions or the human heart?

Pro 15:17 A simple meal with love is better than a feast where there is hatred.

Pro 15:17 Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.

Last time we discussed the problems of poverty and here we discuss the merits of having less if it is served in an atmosphere of love. Food is an obsession these days. We live in an increasingly fat society. In Bedfordshire they are charging an extra £76 to bury fat people because they take up more room in the cemetery. An X Factor reject and her family of four with a combined weight of 83 stone claim more than £22,000 in benefits a year say they are too fat to work. With the headlines, "Obesity crisis on the same scale as global warming" The Foresight research was commissioned in 2005 to help ministers to understand the scale of the problem. Some 86 per cent of men are expected to be overweight within 15 years and 70 per cent of women within 20 years.

There is an obsession with food and there is an obsession with people who prepare food. Channel 4 ratings gave 3rd Ramsays Kitchen Nightmares USA 3,184, 7th Come Dine with Me 2,593, 8th Heston's Victorian Feast 2,561, 3 programmes associated with cooking and 3 with dysfunctional people cooking. "Come dine with me" appears to deliberately mismatch people so that the entertainment, if it can be called that, is not in the cooking but in the nastiness of the diners.

Heston Blumenthal (Fat Duck restaurant owner where 240 people succumbed to Norovirus) says that he has overcome his bad temper unlike Ramsay who is an example of a disturbed foul mouthed bully who makes food. I cannot understand why anyone would want to go and eat in his restaurants. There is nothing to show that he prepares the food with a loving heart for his guests. It is all about him and his needs.

Feasting (festival) is a celebration of friendship and sharing. You hardly go out of your way to make a meal for your enemies and people you do not like. You do not make a guest list and include those persons. Meals are about love. We do not want unpleasantness while we eat or someone or something that serves to bring unpleasant memories or prospects to the minds of pleasure-seekers. We do not want a skeleton at a feast. That said there was an ancient Egyptian practice of including a skeleton at feasts as a reminder of mortality so I imagine they were not too happy occasions.

Our verse teaches us something about eating. It is not the amount or the cost that is important, it is the company and their attitude. A meal can be completely ruined by hatred. We are being told to pick our company as carefully as we choose our menu.

We are also commanded to have nothing to do with the too fat to work brigade. We are not even to support them. Our charity like our company is regulated by God's word. *2Th 3:10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.*

Food is a special blessing from God. The miracle of its growth and provision is a reason why we say the "Grace". We should also be aware of the presence of hatred and the company at those occasions.

As that wonderful little Christian wall plaque states; *"Christ is the head of this house, The unseen guest at every meal, The silent listener to every conversation."*

Pro 15:21 Folly is joy to him that is destitute of wisdom

Pro 15:21 Folly is joy to him that is destitute of wisdom: but a man of understanding walketh uprightly.

In architecture a folly is a building constructed strictly as a decoration having none of the usual purposes of housing or sheltering associated with a conventional structure. Folly is foolishness. This verse reminded me of a boy I once knew. I met him one Saturday afternoon as he was doing his paper round. At the point I met him he was concentrating on the task of kicking a wooden fence to the ground heedless to the fact that people were in the house. We became friends. His, at the time, "admirable" but folly eventually led him to prison. He was found taking revenge on his school. He had tied a brick to a long pole and was in the process of smashing all the windows when the Police arrive. Stupid is as stupid does.

Our society revels in folly. "He's a fat yellow moron who's just won the Turner Prize. So why does the world love Homer Simpson (a cartoon character)?" Homer is an obese, balding, yellow moron who

tells his daughter Lisa that she shouldn't smoke because 'the Sturgeon General says you're not supposed to'. 'A sturgeon is a fish,' says Lisa. 'And a very wise fish he is.' Homer replies. He's so dim he once lost a war with his own garden worms. His excuse? 'They multiply when I cut them. I can't fight that.' Told by Lisa that she's heard something in the kitchen he replies, 'That's where the food sleeps!'

Homer admires and even worships stupidity. He just can't see the point in being clever. As he observed contemplating the candidates for the recent U.S. election: 'A president doesn't have to be smart. All he has to do is point the army and shoot.'

Stupid is easy and because there is so much of it in us we relate to it. We like stupid headlines in the news.....sensible headlines are boring.

So called reality TV is another example. Such shows in reality portray a modified and highly influenced form of reality with participants put in exotic locations or abnormal situations, sometimes coached to act in certain ways by off-screen handlers and with events on screen sometimes manipulated through editing and other post-production techniques. One of the iconic figures to emerge from this genre was Jade Cerisa Lorraine Goody.

Jade Goody was famous for her ignorance. "Do they speak Portuguese in Portugal? I thought Portugal was in Spain. Rio de Janeiro, ain't that a person? Where is East Anglar [Anglia], is it abroad? What's a sparagus? Do you grow it? Who is Heinzstein [Einstein]? I knew Lynne was from Aberdeen, but I didn't realise Aberdeen was in Scotland. They were trying to use me as an escape goat". Jade Goody was happily ignorant. She changed a lot though as we learned in her funeral sermon.

Funeral oration:

"And maybe there's one more thing we don't expect to find as we come to bury this vibrant 27 year old mother, daughter, wife and friend - HOPE. Even when we're faced with the harsh reality of death hope is what is offered by the Christian faith, the Christian faith into which Jade herself was baptised just four weeks ago today (March 2009). And that hope is not found in the rules or rituals of an ancient religion but in a living person, Jesus Christ whose name Jade wasn't afraid to take on her lips: not as a swear word but as the name of the person she wanted Bobby and Freddie to get to know for themselves".

I know that Jade liked reading the gospel of Luke in the New Testament. Why not read it for yourselves? Its interesting that Jade liked Luke's gospel in particular as its the one that highlights God's love for unlikely people. She will have read there in Luke's gospel how Jesus welcomed those who weren't particularly religious and how Jesus spent time with people like herself: down to earth people whose lives, like Jade's, were at times flawed and difficult, but whose lives were precious to God. And she will have read there, in Luke's gospel, of Jesus bringing the hope that we all need.

Jade discovered that turning to Jesus brought comfort and peace for herself and her children. She discovered it late on but she discovered it in time. Why not discover it for yourselves now?

You see, we don't have all the answers to our questions of suffering and pain. But we do have Jesus who shares what we're going through and who shows infinite compassion and care. We don't have the guarantee of a pain-free life but we do have Jesus who can walk with us through illness, grief and anything else life may throw at us. We don't have a way of finally escaping death but we do have Jesus, who died for us and then defeated death itself at Easter giving us hope of life beyond the grave.

And that life is not just a continuation of what we have now but a life that is finally free from sickness, from pain, from grief and from all that spoils our lives and our world here. How true are Jade's words that heaven is a place where sick people go to be made well because heaven is where we finally meet face to face Jesus the greatest healer of all, who alone is able to make our broken lives whole. "I had the privilege last week of being able to see the Bible Jade read from. Here it is, and here is possibly the most significant thing about it. She's underlined one chapter more fully than any other. Its one of the most momentous passages of the whole Bible and its actually in the Old Testament, in a book of the Bible called Isaiah and chapter 53. The words were written 700 years before Jesus, but speak of him and describe exactly what He came to do. They're words that lie at the heart of the Christian faith and describe the events of Good Friday that Christians will remember this coming week. Here are some of the words that Jade underlined:

All of us were like sheep that were lost, Each of us going his own way. But the Lord made the punishment fall on him, The punishment all of us deserve.

These words explain that it is possible to be confident about heaven even though our lives are flawed. You see none of us - not you, not me, not Jade - can stand before a holy God with lives free from mistakes, from faults, from things that we regret. As these verses that Jade underlined tell us, we don't have perfect lives. But we do have Jesus who opened heaven's doors: not for great achievers, not for those who think they are better than others, but for people like Jade, who simply reach out to Jesus and trust in him, even when all else seems hopeless.

To me, the fact these verses are underlined means that Jade understood this incredible good news about Jesus. It means that Jade has only completed the first chapter of a life that continues in his loving presence. It means that when the last column inches have been written about Jade's unforgettable life then that in no way is the end of her story."

It seems that for Jade Goody, folly turned to uprightness through a painful journey. Yes, it was a short life but it is a long eternity and I am sure that she sees the full benefit now.

Pro 15:22 Without counsel purposes are disappointed

Pro 15:22 Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established.

The need to plan life

God is a planner. *Psa 139:16 but with your own eyes you saw my body being formed. Even before I was born, you had written in your book everything I would do.* It is not surprising then that we being made in His image should also have planning as an attribute. Even God's smallest creatures plan. *Pro 6:6 Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.*

In ancient Greek, Roman and Byzantine empires there were military officers with the title 'Logistikas' who were responsible for financial and supply distribution matters. They were the planners, the logisticians, the movers and shakers. You can be one.

You need a life plan! It may be that you will modify that plan or even change it completely but you do need a plan. A plan is like a chart or map. It marks the points from start to finish, from journeys beginning to journeys end. Better to drive your life than be driven by the winds of men and circumstance.

Where would you like to be in 5 or 10 years time? God willing and we should live you will be somewhere on this earth. Will you be there because you wanted to be there or will you be there because that's just the way it happened?

Carpe diem. Seize the day! Ah you say, "what good is planning, did you not say that God had already written everything that I would do?" But suppose that writing includes all of the plans and possibilities for your life? The range of achievements? You could have done so much better if you had chosen to do this? The map of your life may have many paths on it and you may only choose to go down a few.

We would assume that you have consulted the Lord in some way? *Psa 119:105 Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. Deu 4:29 But if from thence thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul.*

Whatever we want to do in life or achieve should be brought into the light of God. If there are things we would do that we cannot for embarrassment or shame bring to God then we cannot expect them to be blessed.

There is the story in the gospels of a planner. *Luk 12:16 And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?* What was wrong with the plan?

The disappointments of life are often a result of a lack of planning

A lot of people blame their failure on their upbringing and circumstances. It is as if they were imprisoned in a web of life from which there was no escaping. Certainly many people are dealt a very difficult hand at the start of life but they can play their cards with success. Take for example Nicholas James "Nick" Vujicic, an Australian Christian evangelist and motivational speaker born with tetra-amelia syndrome, a rare disorder characterised by the absence of all four limbs. <http://www.lifewithoutlimbs.org/about-nick/bio/>

I think that planning with God can make difficulties bearable. It is where God is absent that doubts, fears and recriminations set in. You have no doubt heard of the two frogs that fell into a jar of milk. One gave up the struggle and drowned, the other kept swimming around and around until he churned the milk into butter. He climbed out. The desire to win, the desire to succeed and the desire to achieve are not limited by God. They are limited by us. The difference between the possible and the impossible is the measure of man's will.

Joseph had a very difficult upbringing but Joseph's plan saved Egypt and Israel by a 14 year plan. *Gen 41:48 And he gathered up all the food of the seven years, which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities: the food of the field, which was round about every city, laid he up in the same. Gen 41:49 And Joseph gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left numbering; for it was without number.* Joseph knew God's will and planned accordingly. It is as if he saw the end and just worked towards it. *Gen 50:20 But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.* I think that having a plan gave him much comfort in adversity.

Like the men of Issachar. *1Ch 12:32 And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do; the heads of them were two hundred; and all their brethren were at their commandment.* Planning has a lot to do with knowing what is going on around you. Your plans are affected by the state of the world. Some Christians think that what goes on in the world has nothing to do with them so they remain uninformed but this will make it difficult to plan.

The parable of the Talents is a parable about planning. *Mat 25:14 For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.* The man who had no plan suffered loss. Many feeling the stock market losses may reflect on this.

Plans can be realised

For some people life is an escalator and they wake every morning and get on it without a second thoughtthey are swept along by a tide of other peoples making. They make no plans for their old age and then complain when they have no resources when they get there. They live irresponsible lives and expect other people to pick them up. This is not the Christian way of life. I think that the following verse is not a "comment" or "advice" but a "command".

Psa 37:5 Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. Literally "Roll your way".

While we accept God's Sovereignty and Providence as absolute we see that it is not at the expense of human indifference. *Php 2:12 work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

It is through the working out that God can do His working IN.

We should consult the Lord in some way? Through the Word. *Psa 119:105 Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.* Through prayer. *Deu 4:29 But if from thence thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul.*

Here is an example of success. It is also a very detailed request. Some people may think it is wrong to be specific with God. I think God likes to be in the detail. *Gen 24:12 And he said, O LORD God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham. Gen 24:13 Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water: Gen 24:14 And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master.*

Counsel is a key to realisation

The President of the United States does not run America by himself. The task is too great for one person. He surrounds himself with advisors some good and some, no doubt not so good. Mr President may announce the decisions but you can be sure that he did not make them all.

In the "multitude" of counsellors is wisdom. The question is though who are the counsellors?

- *Psa 64:2 Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked; from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity:*
- *1Ch 27:33 Ahithophel and Hushai the Archite were two of David's advisors. 1Ch 27:33 And Ahithophel was the king's counsellor: and Hushai the Archite was the king's companion:*
- *Eph 2:10 For we are his workmanship, having been created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God has before prepared that we should walk in them.*

Success can be guaranteed

Success in absolute terms is success under God's rule. *Isa 48:18 How I wish that you had obeyed my commands!* Your success and good fortune would then have overflowed like a flooding river.

- *1Ki 2:3 Do what the LORD your God commands and follow his teachings. Obey everything written in the Law of Moses. Then you will be a success, no matter what you do or where you go.*
- *Gen 26:12 Isaac planted grain and had a good harvest that same year. The LORD blessed him, and Isaac was so successful that he became very rich.*

- *Gen 39:2 So Joseph lived in the home of Potiphar, his Egyptian owner. Soon Potiphar realized that the LORD was helping Joseph to be successful in whatever he did.*

If you look upon the things you achieve in this life as a result of your own ability you will fail.

Deu 8:17 When you become successful, don't say, "I'm rich, and I've earned it all myself." Deu 8:18 Instead, remember that the LORD your God gives you the strength to make a living. That's how he keeps the promise he made to your ancestors. Deu 8:19 But I'm warning you - if you forget the LORD your God and worship other gods, the LORD will destroy you, just as he destroyed the nations you fought.

1Sa 15:17 And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the LORD anointed thee king over Israel?

Humility is the virtue of success.

Pro 15:27 Being greedy causes trouble for your family

Pro 15:27 Being greedy causes trouble for your family, but you protect yourself by refusing bribes.

What is greed? How would you describe it? Are greed and integrity compatible? Integrity is an adherence to moral and ethical principles; soundness of moral character; (honesty Integrity = **Int**tom. Completeness, figuratively prosperity). The Latin "integer" means literally "untouched", hence "whole" and the word entire comes from the same origin, but via French.

Abimelech was a man of integrity. *Gen 20:5 Said he not unto me, She is my sister? and she, even she herself said, He is my brother: in the integrity of my heart and innocency of my hands have I done this. Gen 20:6 And God said unto him in a dream, Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart; for I also withheld thee from sinning against me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her.* God recognised Abimelech's integrity and stood beside it.

The only person who can damage your integrity is you! *Job 27:5 God forbid that I should justify you: till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me.* A person with integrity will be guided. *Pro 11:3 The integrity of the upright shall guide them: but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them.*

Integrity is NOT consistent with taking all that is available. Health minister Phil Hope MP (Care Services Minister) is to repay £41,709 in second home allowances following media revelations. The Corby MP said he had kept to the rules but stories about his expenses had caused a "massive blow" to his integrity and standing with voters. Phil Hope claimed for a Hamburger Maker from John Lewis, together with a £5 swivel peeler and two £6 tea towels, a £120 barbecue and £61 for gardening materials, despite rules stating that MPs can only claim for garden maintenance, were also included for what was said to be a "modest" two-bedroom flat in south London. Why pay it back if you did nothing wrong? "Acting within the rules" has been the justification for taking all that is going.

What Phil Hope is really saying is that his self-image has been dented. People now see him differently not as he wants them to see him. If he had integrity he would not have been caught out. He caused trouble for his family. "We feel very badly hurt by what has happened and although I kept to the rules laid down by Parliament I cannot allow this dreadful perception about what I claimed in allowances to continue".

Green book: In July 1995, the House agreed to adopt the Code of Conduct for Members of Parliament – this can be found on the internet at:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmcode.htm> – this includes a number of general principles of personal conduct. These are based on concepts of selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership. The broad principles set out below are derived from the Code of Conduct and underpin the allowance regime. When making claims against parliamentary allowances Members must adhere to these principles.

- Members must ensure that claims do not give rise to, or give the appearance of giving rise to an improper personal financial benefit to themselves or anyone else.
- The requirement of ensuring value for money is central in claiming for accommodation, goods or services – Members should avoid purchases which could be seen as extravagant or luxurious. See lists at end...

The following questions are designed to assist Members incoming to a decision about whether or not costs incurred are appropriate to be met from the allowances:

- Is this expense genuinely incurred by me in my role as a Member of Parliament as opposed to my personal capacity?
- Is this purchase supporting me in carrying out my parliamentary duties? Defining parliamentary duties is difficult but Members may wish to consider (i) the generally accepted parliamentary functions: the legislative role; the oversight and accountability role; and the representative role, including dealing with constituents' problems and (ii) obligations they may have, for example as a small employer.
- Anything which is done for personal benefit or for electioneering or for the direct support of a political party will not be part of a Member's parliamentary duties.
- Does the claim match the purpose of the allowance in question as set out later in the Green Book?
- Could the claim in any way damage the reputation of Parliament or its Members?
- How comfortable do I feel with the knowledge that my claim will be available to the public under Freedom of Information?

The rules were quite clear and many did not act within its rules. Lord Carey former Arch Bishop of Canterbury warned that politicians can never restore public confidence and trust unless the heart of democracy is restored which, he said is a vision of sacrificial love and putting the needs of others before your own. He said it is not just the "clawing greed of painstaking claims" for minor items but also the "egregious (flagrant, extraordinary) way some have transferred allowances from one second property to another - enabling them to refurbish homes at public expense, then sell them for profit".

The greedy bankers and greedy politicians are one of a kind. Both sides claim the small print of their jobs allows them to rip off the public no questions asked. It;s outrageous that executives at the Royal Bank of Scotland (70 per cent owned by you and me) are getting £1billion of our money in bonuses. For what? This dud bank would have gone bust without £20billion from the taxpayer. Never mind giant bonuses, none of the staff would still be in a job.

We have not defined greed. The Hebrew word in our text means to break off (plunder) and to finish. Finish what? *Lev 23:22 And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not make clean riddance of the corners of thy field when thou reapest, neither shalt thou gather any gleanings of thy harvest: thou shalt leave them unto the poor, and to the stranger: I am the LORD your God. Deu 24:21 When thou gatherest the grapes of thy vineyard, thou shalt not glean it afterward: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow.*

You didn't take everything and you didn't finish everything off. You had in mind in your dealings the less fortunate that governed your greed. Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. The Code of Conduct for Members of Parliament says just that, "They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends."

We have greedy leaders and we are a troubled nation.

The 'John Lewis' list for MPs

Air conditioner unit: £299.99
Bedside cabinet: £100
Book case/shelf: £200
Bookcase/cabinet: £500
Carpet: £35 per sq m
Carpet fitting: £6.50 per sq m
Coffee table: £250
Dining armchairs: £150 each
Dining chairs: £90 each
Dining table: £600
Dishwasher: £375
Drawer chest (5): £500
Dressing table: £500
Food mixer: £200
Free-standing mirror: £300
Fridge/freezer: £550
Bathroom: £6,335
Kitchen: £10,000
Nest of tables: £200
Recordable DVD: £270
Rugs: £300
Shredder: £50
Sideboard: £795
Tumble dryer: £250
Underlay: £6.99 per sq m
Wardrobe: £700
Washer/dryer: £500
Washing machine: £350
Wood floor: £35 per sq m
Workstation: £150

David Maclean: shopping list of MP who led fight to keep expenses secret
A list of items the MP has claimed for since 2004.

2004/05

£1198.70 garden trees
£625 "digger" from Thanet Well Motors
£1,866.49 Thermatech boiler
£2,023.92 fence posts

2005/06

£2,300 silver E-Ton Vector 250cc quad bike

2006/07

£1,298 Panasonic 32in flat screen TV

2007/08

£70 carpet cleaning
£40 John Lewis Egyptian cotton satin fitted kingsize sheet
£40 Four John Lewis Egyptian cotton satin fitted pillowcases
£59.95 Bosch steam iron
£140 John Lewis Egyptian cotton satin kingsize flat sheet
£38.98 two multi-socket adaptors
£29.99 Penguin steam cleaner
£12.99 shaver sharpener
£5.85 three Peter Jones coffee cups
£4.05 three Peter Jones coffee saucers
£14 Peter Jones bowl
£18 four Peter Jones dinner plates
£12 four Peter Jones side plates
£12 two Peter Jones sauceboat stands
£6.75 oblong Peter Jones platter
£24 two Peter Jones pasta plates
£120 two Peter Jones natural pillows
£364.72 a display mirror, silver display light, two oak two-door glass display cabinets and five drawer chest of drawers from Argos
£437.99 Zanussi washer dryer
£236.60 two lamps from Debenhams

Pro 15:29 The LORD is far from the wicked

Pro 15:29 The LORD is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous. Pro 15:29 The LORD never even hears the prayers of the wicked, but he answers the prayers of all who obey him. CEV

There is a common misconception that God spends His time hanging around waiting for all people to pray to Him and that He listens to all prayers. God is by this idea subject to our pleasure and subject to us. This verse dismisses that idea completely.

Another issue arises. Should we pray for other people who are not believers? “I’ll pray for you” is a phrase I hear often. Why, if they cannot pray for themselves can I do any better since God is far from the wicked? If I pray for them, am I not going against the will of God? Am I not trying to by-pass His will?

Jesus said: Joh 17:9 I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. How do we reconcile this with 1Ti 2:1 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men;? What do we pray for? “that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty”. It is a prayer for our benefit, just as this one in Acts...

Act 4:29 And now, Lord, behold their threatenings and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus. If we are concerned for the lost, our first prayer should be that we as individuals may have the opportunity to sow the seeds of salvation, planters and waterers. Just praying that someone becomes a Christian or that they are saved is in some measure a cop out.

What am I prepared to do myself in bringing the gospel to someone’s life? Prayer is sometimes approached in the same way that we approach charity. We put something in an envelope to ease our conscience but we don’t give of ourselves.

Opportunist prayer. *Col 4:3 Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds:*

What does the part of our text mean when it says He hears the prayer of the righteous? Does it mean He hears people in church or that He hears Christians whatever the condition of their lives? What is righteous? It is practical belief in God’s word. *Rom 4:3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.* It is faith in action. *Jas 2:20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?*

We need to understand the boundaries and rules of prayer. Much of our prayer is selfish and irrelevant. *Jas 4:1 From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Jas 4:2 Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and*

cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Jas 4:3 Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. Should we pray for success in examinations? Should we pray to keep our jobs? Should we pray for our health? Should we pray for safe journeys? Perhaps if it is for the service and glory of Christ. If not what is it for but our own self interest? I hope like those greedy MP's this might cause us to go away and think very carefully about our requests and whether they can withstand the righteousness test.

If you want to see the selfless content of prayer go and read for yourself the prayer of Jesus in the Garden in John 17.

Pro 16:1 We humans make plans, but the LORD has the final word.

Pro 16:9 A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps.

Pro 16:1 The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the LORD. Pro 16:2 All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the LORD weigheth the spirits. Pro 16:3 Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established. Pro 16:4 The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil. Pro 16:5 Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD: though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished. Pro 16:6 By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil. Pro 16:7 When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.

The proverbs in Pro 16:1-7 have more than any other group an especially religious character impressed upon them. The name of Yahweh as Giver, Guide, Ruler or Judge meets us in each of them.

A popular religious text is Thomas a Kempis' work "Of the imitation of Christ" In it he writes: "*For the resolutions of the just depend rather on the grace of God than on their own wisdom; and in Him they always put their trust, whatever they take in hand. For man proposes, but God disposes; neither is the way of man in his own hands*".

It reminds us that while we make plans they are nothing and will come to nothing if the Lord is not in them. The hope that we can bring ourselves out of recession and secure a stable future without God is a dream. There is no avoiding the end that God has planned (Revelation 18). If you want to plan for the future plan to get closer to God.

We came across a similar verse the other week. *Psa 37:5 Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.* Success is planning with God.

The Jews have a lovely way of reminding themselves of this with a type of phylactery is the **מזוזה** (Mezuzah) and consists of the two paragraphs from the sixth and eleventh chapters of Deuteronomy.

Deu 6:4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: Deu 6:5 And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. Deu 6:6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: Deu 6:7 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. Deu 6:8 And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. Deu 6:9 And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.

Deu 11:13 And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the LORD your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul, Deu 11:14 That I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil. Deu 11:15 And I will send grass in thy fields for thy cattle, that thou mayest eat and be full. Deu 11:16 Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them; Deu 11:17 And then the LORD'S wrath be kindled against you, and he shut up the heaven, that there be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit; and lest ye perish quickly from off the good land which the LORD giveth you. Deu 11:18 Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes. Deu 11:19 And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. Deu 11:20 And thou shalt write them upon the door posts of thine house, and upon thy gates: Deu 11:21 That your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth.

These were written upon one piece of parchment which is rolled up from the right to the left. The word 'שדד Shaddai together with three other words, "Adonai, Eloheinu, Adonai", "The Lord, our God, the Lord" is written upon the outside; it is then put in a reed, a tin or other case and fixed upon the door post in every proper room, so that the name 'שדד (being visible through an aperture left in the case) may be seen by everyone entering the apartment and be thus ever reminded of the greatness and power of the Almighty.

Success is planning with God. Before we rush out of the door in the morning should we not pause to ask God's direction and support? Should we not remind ourselves of who we are and where we come from? We are mortal and we come from the dust. We are but a breath and then we are gone. We have no being or substance without our God so we should be facing Him constantly. The word Shaddai on the Mezuzah reminded the Jew of God's power.

One of my great complaints against religion is that people meet God at the door of churches and leave Him there when they go home. Its like saying hello to the vicar! From weekend to weekend God is not active with them. They do not walk with God. *Gen 5:24 And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.*

When you go out of your house do you walk out with God or do you leave him in the house? I remember the sung blessing that used to be used at the end of services. It was a reminder of our duties and that we did them with God.

God be in my head, and in my understanding;
God be in mine eyes, and in my looking;
God be in my mouth, and in my speaking;
God be in my heart, and in my thinking;
God be at mine end, and at my departing.

Pro 16:2 All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes

Pro 16:2 All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the LORD weigheth the spirits.

This verse gives us a Divine insight into human nature. It is that we hold very high opinions of ourselves and we see ourselves as near perfect. I am reminded of the local MP McKay who was arguing his innocence in the face of public condemnation. He could not see himself as others saw him. Margaret Beckett arrogantly said that she understood that the people did not understand the issues she was involved in. You will see the confusion in people's faces when they are caught out. It is like they are saying "did I really do that". Bill Clinton... "But I want to say one thing to the American people. I want you to listen to me. I'm going to say this again: I did not have sexual relations with that woman, Miss Lewinsky. I never told anybody to lie, not a single time; never. These allegations are false and I need to go back to work for the American people. Thank you."

We use an expression these days to describe the condition. It is called being in denial. Denial is a defence mechanism postulated by Sigmund Freud in which a person is faced with a fact that is too uncomfortable to accept and rejects it, instead insisting that it is not true despite what may be overwhelming evidence.

Take the example of Adam. Adam was not deceived. *1Ti 2:14 And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.* But his response to being caught was to dismiss it as someone else's problem. *Gen 3:12 And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.* He is saying don't blame me, its not my fault, I haven't done anything wrong...its the woman's fault.

We use pretence to cover our deceit. We actually convince ourselves that wrong is right and black is white. The Bible calls it the imagination of the heart: *Gen 8:21 I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.* See appendix below.

One of the biggest obstacles to man becoming a Christian is his inability to admit that he is wrong and that he is a sinner. How many times do you hear people who make mistakes say that were wrong? They are happy to point out others are wrong but not themselves. People talk about sin in the plural....'we' sin but not very often about 'my' sin. It reminds me of Gordon Brown when confronted about what he did wrong answering that "we have made mistakes". It was not the royal we, it was the "we" of someone hiding in the crowd.

It is not possible to know ourselves until He Holy Spirit moves in our lives. *Rom 7:7 I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.* Until that

time we live in a world of lies. It should not surprise us that men believe in evolution, that they believe that homosexuality is a valid option, that abortion is acceptable and that God does not exist. They are blind. Man has blind eyes, hence his ways are clean to himself. Ever wondered why so many blind people are healed in the Gospels? Its the primary ministry of the Spirit.

We live in the days when it can be said. *Jdg 21:25 In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.*

APPENDIX: A Kray Twins exclusive! 'We acted at all times within the rules' By Richard Littlejohn

One story you may have missed this week in all the kerfuffle over the assisted suicide of Gordon Brown was the revelation that gangland killer Reggie Kray attempted to make a fresh start after being jailed for murder. While not actually repenting his crimes he did try to turn over a new leaf. Its not certain whether Reggie who with his twin brother Ronnie ran a reign of terror in London's East End in the 1960s, was sincere or this was just a clever ruse to get out of jail.

Just imagine if Reggie was alive today being interviewed on the Today programme and employing what we have come to know as the Gordon Brown defence.

Evan Montague: "Good morning, I'm Evan Montague. My guest in the studio today is the East End businessman Reginald Kray, who has just been convicted of murder at the Old Bailey."

Reginald Kray: "If I could just stop you there, Evan, you're being a bit previous."

Evan Montague: "But you and your brother were both found guilty by a jury."

Reginald Kray: "Look, our old mum brought us up with a firm sense of right and wrong, to tell the truth at all times - except to the Old Bill, obviously."

Evan Montague: "Are you saying you're not guilty?"

Reginald Kray: "It was a right fit-up. Frankly, I'm disgusted at what I heard in that court. My conscience is offended."

Evan Montague: "With respect, 12 men and women weighed the evidence and reached a unanimous verdict."

Reginald Kray: "That's just one rogue poll, based on a very small sample. Its not what we're hearing on the doorstep."

Evan Montague: "On the doorstep?"

Reginald Kray: "You knock on any door in Vallance Road, Evan, and people will tell you that what they want is for the Kray Twins to get on with the job."

Evan Montague: "But you run organised crime rackets and are responsible for a wave of violence and murder. Are you denying your involvement in the Whitechapel bullion robbery?"

Reginald Kray: "At least we didn't sell off the gold for a quarter of what it was worth."

Evan Montague: "But it didn't belong to you."

Reginald Kray: "We only rob those what can afford to pay their fair share. We are providing much-needed jobs in our community in these difficult times."

Evan Montague: "Such as?"

Reginald Kray: "Croupiers, strippers, prostitutes. We are also financing traditional East End trades, such as blagging and demanding money with menaces."

Evan Montague: "But that's against the law."

Reginald Kray: "We have acted at all times within the rules."

Evan Montagu: The "rules?"

Reginald Kray: "The rules of our organisation. We have a strict code of conduct in our world."

Evan Montague: "But the public are appalled when they read about some of the things which have been going on."

Reginald Kray: "I'm appalled, too, Evan. I can assure you today that those who have transgressed will be chastised, starting with the slag what grassed us up to the Daily Telegraph. Those guilty of the most serious wrongdoing will not be standing again."

Evan Montague: "Not standing for what?"

Reginald Kray: "Not anything, Evan. Just not standing. Or breathing, come to that."

Evan Montague: "So you admit you murdered Jack 'The Hat' McVitie?"

Reginald Kray: "I have acted at all times within the rules, as has my brother."

Evan Montague: "But he murdered George Cornell, shot him in the head in the Blind Beggar, after Cornell called him a 'fat poof'."

Reginald Kray: "Cornell's behaviour was wholly unacceptable. Under our rules, lack of respect is punishable by summary execution. Ronnie done nothing wrong."

Evan Montague: "That's murder, you both deserve to go prison. No one should be above the law."

Reginald Kray: "Why not? Parliament is. If some of them MPs had stolen from us like they stole from the taxpayer, they'd be propping up motorway flyovers."

Evan Montague: "But, Mr Kray, the public is demanding that the East End is cleaned up, especially the blood on the pavement outside the Blind Beggar."

Reginald Kray: "And I agree with them. That's why I am getting on with the job. Who better to clean the place up than those what created the mess in the first place?"

Evan Montague: "With respect, Mr Kray, you've had at least 12 years to clean up your act, but you've chosen to steal, kill and get rich on the proceeds of crime."

Reginald Kray: "People don't want to dwell on the past, they want to know what we are going to do in the future. Things is going to be different around here from now on."

Evan Montague: "But you're only saying that because you've been caught red-handed."

Reginald Kray: "I'm glad my old mum can't hear you, son, or I'd have to cut your tongue out. I didn't go into organised crime to get rich. Me and Ron still live in the same house we grew up in. We haven't got second homes, or moats, or porticos or duck houses, unlike some people I could name."

Evan Montague: "Why should we believe you when you say you are going straight in future?"

Reginald Kray: "We're getting rid of the old Gentlemen's Club, for a start. We're turning it into a casino. Now that Labour's introduced 24-hour licensing on every high street, there's no profit in spielers. Our scrapyards are well-placed to take advantage of the Government's scrappage scheme and our counterfeiting department has picked up a nice little contract to help the Treasury with its quantitative easing."

Evan Montague: "And what next for you, Mr Kray?"

Reginald Kray: "I'm thinking of becoming an MP. Who needs the Long Firm game when you can buy a few houses and do them up with taxpayers' money, sell them on and avoid capital gains tax?"

Evan Montague: "What makes you think the public would vote for a criminal as their Member of Parliament?"

Reginald Kray: "Silly question, son. Be lucky."

Pro 16:4 The LORD hath made all things for himself

Pro 16:4 The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.

The Universe and the worlds that we cannot see are for God's pleasure. *Rev 4:11 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created..... Rom 11:36 For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen..... Col 1:16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:*

History is the record of God's outworked plans. Kings and Queens, war and peace are all manifestations of the Divine plan. They are not random acts without purpose. This is proven clearly in the words of prophecy for example predicting the Messiah, which can only be certain to happen if God is controlling the events leading to this. The idea that God just "foresees" events and makes lucky guesses about what will happen is unbiblical. That is like betting on getting an infinite series correct.

Our verse has a darker edge. While we may have little trouble accepting God working the future for good, making the wicked for the day of evil seems to contradict God's sense of fairness. But who said God was fair? *Rom 9:15 For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.*

The world may make the image of God like mild, aged, Father Christmas giving good things to all in unconditional love, forgiving and overlooking the most heinous crimes of his children. The rapes, murders, holocausts, wars, all are mistakes of misguided humanity but count for nothing against eternal love and forgiveness. Rubbish!

Let me teach you a new theological word that I learned years ago. It is Preterition from the Latin "to Passover or by". Preterition teaches that God neglected to designate those who would be damned, positively determining only the elect. In Law it is an omitting of one or more legal heirs from a will.

Preterition is God's act of passing by or leaving some men when he chose others, according to his sovereign will and pleasure. It is however much more than Divine neglect. *Exo 4:11 And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD?*

In Romans it describes the absolute sovereignty of God. He is the Potter and makes what He wants. *Rom 9:16 So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. Rom 9:17 For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Rom 9:18 Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Rom 9:19 Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Rom 9:20 Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Rom 9:21 Hath not the potter power over*

the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?

There are those who find this objectionable and try to “defend” God by making it a doctrine of Divine omission. Some are chosen others not, however it needs no defence. It would be an uncertain world with a very uncertain future if God were not in command. God builds the damned into the plans of life. Evil people like Pharaoh or Hitler were raised up for the evil day.

Evil days do not happen by chance. They are calculated and planned on the Divine calendar. If you worry about how you can survive those evil days, take God’s remedy. *Eph 6:13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.*

Pro 16:5 Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD

Pro 16:5 Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD: though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished.

What is the difference between pride and boldness? Pride is, depending upon context, either a high sense of the worth of one's self or one's own or a pleasure taken in the thinking about these things. One definition of pride in the first sense comes from Augustine: "the love of one's own excellence."

What then of the phrases “taking pride in what you do” or being “proud of your appearance”? Perhaps proud is the wrong word to use. We mean paying attention and care to what we do so that we do it to our best ability. There is a difference between working to achieve high standards and loving one’s own excellence. Pride considers itself to be better than it is.

Miriam fell under prides wheels (Numbers 12) as did Uzziah. *2Ch 26:16 But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense.*

2Co 10:3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations

If pride is an abomination to God it is an abomination to us. It is our Christian duty to tear it down wherever it rears itself and in whatever form. We are iconoclasts, the breakers of images. Christ pulled down imaginations. *Mat 23:27 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.*

Christ did not spare their feelings or use diplomatic words. He was straight talking. Christ pours scorn on the actors of this world. *Mat 23:13 But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. Mat 23:14 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour*

widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Mat 23:15 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves. Mat 23:16 Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor! Mat 23:17 Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold? Mat 23:18 And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty. Mat 23:19 Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift?

Jesus was particularly good at seeing through people as He was a great observer of men. There is a series on TV called the "Mentalist". It is about a seemingly psychic police investigator but in reality he is just a good observer.

One of the stories this week was the "Digital Britain" report. Grinning out of its foreword are the two homosexuals, Mandelson and Bradshaw. If people are taken in by this report which is another instance of government interfering in the private sector and think that all our National woes will be solved by two homosexuals and a fibre optic cable then they are going to be very much mistaken. This is an example of pride at work.

Today we suffer pride and arrogance in the philosophies of our age, evolution, humanism, sexuality, morality and so on. It is our duty to pull it down. Yes we may even become martyrs to it but that is preferable to an eternity in hell. Christian iconoclasts become martyrs. Acts 7.

Pro 16:7 When a man's ways please the LORD

Pro 16:7 When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.

The word peace **שלום** shalom is also rendered restitution, pay, make good, make amends, repay, safe, reward, requite or recompense. The verse can cover all of these ideas as we shall see.

There is a school of thought that thinks that if Christians are not being persecuted for their faith then they are not making a strong enough witness. I think that many times when Christians are persecuted it is because they are offensive and not putting Christ forward. The sectarian marches of the Orange men in Northern Ireland spring to mind. Not every Christian ends up burned at the stake.

Joseph did not have a smooth path but God led him to greatness and eventually he was rewarded. *Gen 41:38 And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is? And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art:*

Abigail and her family were on King David's hit list but her gracious behaviour gave them safety. *1Sa 25:34 For in very deed, as the LORD God of Israel liveth, which hath kept me back from hurting thee, except thou hadst hastened and come to meet me, surely there had not been left unto Nabal by the*

morning light any that pisseth against the wall. So David received of her hand that which she had brought him, and said unto her, Go up in peace to thine house; see, I have hearkened to thy voice, and have accepted thy person.

Daniel was thrown to the lions for his faithfulness but God recompensed him. The enemies were destroyed. *Dan 6:22 My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt.*

Mordecai was the target of Haman's hatred but God gave him and the Israelites restitution. *Est 7:10 So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai.*

David was kept safe from Goliath and Saul. *1Sa 17:37 David said moreover, The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the LORD be with thee.*

Solomon was given a reward for his selflessness. *1 Kings 3:5 In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee. And the speech pleased the Lord.*

Hebrews 11:5 By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

Some try to please men to win them over but God will win men to us if we please Him not men.

Pro 16:8 Its better to be honest and poor than to be dishonest and rich

Pro 16:8 Its better to be honest and poor than to be dishonest and rich.CEV Pro 16:8 Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues without right.

Dishonesty has consequences even in a world where law and standards are declining. Two British law graduates arrested in Brazil on suspicion of fraudulently claiming they were robbed went to trial. Shanti Andrews and Rebecca Turner both 23, appeared in a court in Rio de Janeiro and admitted charges of attempted insurance fraud. Ms Andrews told the court she and Ms Turner had a laptop stolen during a tourist excursion to the south of the country. But the student admitted adding items that had not been stolen to the list including a purse, a mobile phone and a digital camera it was reported. On Thursday Shanti Andrews and Rebecca Turner were handed 16 months' community service by judge in Rio de Janeiro.

We often speak about this behaviour as ill-gotten gains "revenues without right". Benefit fraud amounts to around £2bn a year in the UK. Another story of ill-gotten gains and their consequences was of a woman who found a lottery ticket, "She felt as if she had won the lottery. But as she pocketed £30,000 of prize money Amanda Stacey knew she hadn't quite played by the rules. Instead of buying a winning ticket she had found it on the floor of a supermarket, under the impression that

finders are keepers. However the couple from Swindon were charged with fraud and theft. They pleaded guilty in April and received suspended prison sentences. And yesterday a judge ordered them to hand the remaining £15,000 to Dorothy McDonagh, the woman who originally bought and lost the Daily Play ticket.”

Why are people like this? *1Ti 6:10 For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.* The Rt Rev Dr Frederick J Eikerenkoetter II now departed suggested that the root of all evil is not the love of money, but the lack of it. There is something that rings true in that. How many family arguments are about the lack of money? Is poverty one of our life choices or would we prefer to be rich?

Through the love of money Judas betrayed Christ. People want to be wealthy. Money and wealth is one of the key issues of your life. Do I have enough, can I afford this, can I retire and can I maintain my standard of living? Without money life will grind to a halt.

The need to earn is part of the curse. *Gen 3:19 You will have to sweat to earn a living; you were made out of soil, and you will once again turn into soil.* Dishonesty takes the sweat out of the curse. We can earn a living without working by cheating. The love of a quick easy win in life can be seen in the obsession with the National Lottery. 80 million tickets are sold each week with an estimated additional 50 million for a rollover. People believe the impossible because greed blinds them and they are easily fooled out of their money. The same mentality of a quick easy win makes people gullible to instant diets, instant age loss and any other unbelievable scheme that doesn't require effort.

Our personal integrity and character is far more valuable than dishonest riches because dishonesty will rob us of that character. *Pro 31:10 Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.* It is better to be poor than get your wealth dishonestly because if you do it will undoubtedly bring another curse.

Pro 16:11 The LORD doesn't like it when we cheat in business.

Pro 16:11 The LORD doesn't like it when we cheat in business. CEV Pro 16:11 A just weight and balance are the LORD'S: all the weights of the bag are his work. KJV

Over 75% of high school students in the US have reported cheating according to a Rutgers Management Education Centre study. A recent Amazon top seller is 'The Art of Cheating. A Nasty Little Book for Tricky Little Schemers and Their Hapless Victims'. Author Jessica Dorfman Jones provides 32 cheat tricks including cheating at poker, sleeping your way to the top and falsifying your resume (CV).

Benefit theft cost the country around £800 million in 2005-06, now its nearer £2bn. That's the cost of 32 brand new schools! Other cases in recent weeks include a man who claimed nearly £10,000 in disability benefit despite having two jobs, one of which included a contract to clean the Procurator Fiscal's office (Chief justice) in Edinburgh, as well as a case where two women claimed more than

£30,000 each in single person benefits despite both living with partners on a permanent basis. Lev 19:35 *Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in meteyard, in weight, or in measure.*

This week (September 2009) in Namibia two accused, Chen Bin and He Jian Guo, were arrested in 'Chinatown' in Windhoek's northern industrial area on Friday on charges of fraud and contravention of patent rights and copyrights. The Namibian Police discovered that they were allegedly producing a fake 250g version of the MAQ brand of detergent, and trading it on the market. What has been established however, is the value of the goods confiscated from the makeshift factory, which Sandema confirmed amounted to between N\$500 000 and N\$700 000 (£70,000). The counterfeit detergent "is inferior to the authentic MAQ washing powder in terms of both quality and quantity",

There is a more sinister side to this. Another person Zhang Yujun who produced and sold melamine-laced 'protein powder', was convicted of endangering public security and sentenced to death by the Shijiazhuang Intermediate People's Court while the other man Geng Jinping was convicted of producing and selling toxic food. Tian Wenhua former board chairwoman of the Sanlu Group which is at the heart of the scandal was convicted of manufacturing and selling fake or substandard products and sentenced to life in prison. Three other former executives of Sanlu were jailed for 5-15 years. The Ministry of Health said it was likely the tainted milk scandal killed at least six babies. Another 296,000 infants suffered kidney stones and other urinary problems.

In Ghana the Foods and Drugs Board (FDB) in July (2009) warned the public of fake Coartem tablets, malaria treatment drugs in the market in Kumasi. The Board has confiscated 150 packs of the product from nine wholesale and retail pharmacies involved in the distribution and sale of the fake products. Using fake or diluted products can increase Malaria resistance.

"Unsafe at Any Speed": The Designed-In Dangers of the American Automobile by Ralph Nader, published in 1965 is a book detailing resistance by car manufacturers to the introduction of safety features, like seat belts and their general reluctance to spend money on improving safety. It was a pioneering work of consumer advocacy.

The subject for which the book is probably most widely known is covered in the first chapter, General Motors' Chevrolet Corvair. The chapter is subtitled "The One-Car Accident". The 1960–1963 Corvairs had a rear engine and a suspension design which was prone to "tuck under" in certain circumstances and which required drivers to maintain proper tyre pressures, which were outside of the tyre manufacturer's recommended tolerances for the tyre. The tyres had an unusually high front/rear differential (15psi front, 26psi rear, when cold; 18 psi and 30psi hot). The tyre pressures were more critical than for most contemporaneous designs but this was not made explicitly clear to salespeople or owners.

It is clear that when the balance swings unjustly it can cause a lot of damage to the innocent.

Darwin postulated Survival of the fittest as a selective mechanism for evolution. "The Selfish Gene" is a book on evolution by Richard Dawkins published in 1976. It builds upon the principal theory of George C. William's first book Adaptation and Natural Selection. Dawkins coined the term "selfish gene" as a way of expressing the gene-centred view of evolution which holds that evolution is best

viewed as acting on genes and that selection at the level of organisms or populations almost never overrides selection based on genes.

The contention is that the genes that get passed on are the ones whose consequences serve their own implicit interests (to continue being replicated), not necessarily those of the organism much less any larger level. This is a basis for condoning cheating if you and yours benefit. You were merely exploiting the situation for your own ends. As we know Darwin's humanism fed Karl Marx Socialism and Adolph Hitler's racial purity. It gave a biological basis for evil.

Now contrast that with the creationist view. It does not exploit or overexploit. *Lev 19:10 And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I am the LORD your God.* It cares for the weak. *Deu 27:19 Cursed be he that perverteth the judgment of the stranger, fatherless, and widow. And all the people shall say, Amen.* It does not retaliate. *Mat 5:39 But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.* The Christian teaching is against exploitation.

God wants you and me to run our lives on a level playing field being fair to everyone. He doesn't want us to cheat or change the rules to get an unfair advantage. Life has to be run fair and square. The consequences of cheating will doubtless come back to haunt us as sure as Esau came back to haunt his cheating brother Jacob.

Pro 16:33 The lot is cast into the lap

Pro 16:33 The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD.

When we look at probability or chance we are trying to establish the likelihood of an outcome. What is the chance of winning the lottery (it is 1 in 14,000,000)? For us life has many levels of risk. Risk is a concept that denotes the probability of specific events. It is the probability or threat of damage, injury, liability, loss or other negative occurrence caused by external or internal vulnerabilities and which may be neutralised through pre-mediated action. Insurance reflects risks by charging higher premiums for higher risk for example in lifestyle.

One of the questions that we have been exploring in our other Creation studies is "What is the chance of life occurring spontaneously and developing to the level of complexity that we see around us?" People who do not believe in intelligent design and a Creator use chance as one force driving development.

Quote: "To conceive of evolution as nothing more than blind chance and randomness is the most serious conceptual mistake one can make. Evolution does contain a component of chance, but there is far more to the process than that, and it is precisely the existence of the non-chance components that allows evolution to work. The process of evolution is driven by the engine of natural selection".

An engine is a (mechanical) device that produces some form of output from a given input. For Darwin the primary "engine" of evolution has been considered to be natural selection. However, if one takes a closer look at this it is clear that natural selection is not an "engine" it is an outcome.

For the evolutionist it is the result of an outcome without any reason or intelligence behind it, it is the roll of the dice. Sequences of dice throws do not however contain information. If the dice is replaced with molecules the outcomes are still sequences without information. I have an exercise for you all to consider and critique. It is a concept by Dawkins that suggests that life can be developed through chance and the Blind Watchmaker.

Look at this http://www.antievolution.org/cs/dawkins_weasel It is a computer program the forms a phrase "Methinks it is like a weasel" as an example of selecting the "right" letter and incorporating it into the phrase. What is wrong with this model? The Answer is at the end.

The verse before us states that there is nothing that ought to be attributed to chance because all things are determined in the counsel of God which will come to pass. The more that we look into our origins and the complexity of life I think that it becomes more and more obvious that chance cannot build this level of complexity

It seems to me that God has confounded men by making them believe in Chance. It is a way that unbelievers cope with life. We always look on the bright side. We do the lottery because we believe that we can beat the odds. We all think that we shall reach a great age and we all think that the bad things will never happen to us. When I ask people if they think that they are a "better than average" driver I rarely hear someone who is not. It reflects this inability to assess reality.

The real certainties of life are in the hands of God not in blind chance or wishful thinking. That reality brings all manner of problems but these for us are designed to shape us into the people that God wants to share eternity with. *Mal 3:16 Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.* The rocks that make the jewels do not start life polished.

Answer to "weasel" program.

If you run this programme, you can create any "target string". I can create a string "It can create rubbish". The reason is that the programme is designed to meet the "end". It is rigged and it is not arbitrary or random. It also has this important element. **Teleonomy**. That means, it is goal directed and is the product of an intelligence. Evolution is not goal directed or intelligent. **Dawkins has kindly destroyed what he set out to prove!**

Weasel as described by Richard Dawkins

Dawkins' description of the "weasel" program can be summarized briefly:

1. Use a set of characters that includes the upper case alphabet and a space.
2. Initialize a population of N 28-character strings by copying with mutation a parent string formed by random assignments of characters from our character set.
3. Identify the string closest to the target string in the population.
4. If a string matches the target, terminate.
5. Base a new generation population of size n upon copies of the closest matching string or strings, where each position has a chance of randomly mutating, based upon a set mutation rate.
6. Go to step 3.

Parameters from Dawkins'

Description

Target string:

Population:

Mutation rate (% per letter): %

Other Parameters

Inter-generation interval: ms

Program Control

Generation: Actual Mut. Rate:

Best match:

Generations that step backward: Matched changes:

Exact copies: Total Candidates:

Console

```
Gen. 115, 25 letters, IT CAN CREATE RUBBISH TOO
25 Matched! in 115 generations.
Gen. 116, 25 letters, IT CAN CREATE RUBBISH TOO
25 Matched! in 116 generations.
Gen. 117, 25 letters, IT CAN CREATE RUBBISH TOO
25 Matched! in 117 generations.
Gen. 118, 25 letters, IT CAN CREATE RUBBISH TOO
25 Matched! in 118 generations.
Gen. 119, 25 letters, IT CAN CREATE RUBBISH TOO
25 Matched! in 119 generations.
Gen. 120, 25 letters, IT CAN CREATE RUBBISH TOO
25 Matched! in 120 generations.
Gen. 121, 25 letters, IT CAN CREATE RUBBISH TOO
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Pro 16:9 A man's heart deviseth his way

Pro 16:9 A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps. Pro 19:21 There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand.

Our text answers the question "who is in charge?" if you had any doubt after the DVD ministry from Louie Giglio that we saw last week, how much proof do you want (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AEh56ROJx48>. "Indescribable"). As Thomas a Kempis observed Man proposes and God disposes. This verse also makes another point that we would do well to take to heart.

You know those times that you and I complain, how you and I moan about the issues in our life. How this is not to our liking or that is not going according to my liking? How the weather is rotten, how you don't like the taste of that or the smell of this or the look of that? We could draw up a huge list, however this verse is saying that all of those issues of life are not random or dispassionate. They are purposeful. Random and chance is not in God's nature or vocabulary.

If we give thanks for the good things in life and complain about the bad things we have missed the point here. Job acknowledged that that God gave things and that God took things away. *Job 1:21 And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.* Job didn't just see God as the

giver of good and some other force as the remover of good. He did not blame the devil for the bad details of life. I am not denying that the devil plays a part but he is not the first cause or the controller of destiny.

Exo 4:11 And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD? Our God who breathed the stars and the galaxies pays as much attention to the details at the molecular level. God is in the detail. There are no mistakes. The blind person may have what we from our position would call a genetic disorder but from God's position it is a variant in His plan.

It is good and right to plan. The parable of the Talents makes the case that the man who failed to plan an investment was an unprofitable servant. The key ingredient in any plan is having God at the centre of it. If He is not your plan may be totally defeated. The story of the rich farmer is a good example of this. *Luk 12:16 And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?*

The Arabs have a word "inshallah", it means if God is willing. We Christians have a similar phrase drawn from the Epistle of James. *Jas 4:13 Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Jas 4:14 Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. Jas 4:15 For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that. Deo volente. God willing. DV.*

"DV" should become part of our vocabulary to remind us of this verse: *A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps.* Pray that those steps might point in the direction of peace and success to the Glory of God.

Pro 17:1 A dry crust of bread eaten in peace

Pro 17:1 A dry crust of bread eaten in peace and quiet is better than a feast eaten where everyone argues.

This is another verse that describes the value of simplicity and the peace it brings. *Pro 15:16 Better is little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith. Pro 15:17 Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith..... Pro 16:8 Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues without right.*

"Simple Gifts" is a Shaker song written and composed in 1848, generally attributed to Elder Joseph Brackett from Alfred Shaker Village, Maine. These are the lyrics to his one-verse song:

'Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the gift to be free, 'Tis the gift to come down where we ought to be, And when we find ourselves in the place just right, 'Twill be in the valley of love and delight.

Our text does not say that having a feast or eating well is at all wrong. Jesus even blessed a wedding feast at Cana and brought to it the best wine in the world. It is about who you share life with and the effect that it will have upon you. Last time we saw that what you feed into your mind will affect your relationship with God. *Rom 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.* If you feed stones into the grinder you will blunt the blades of reason.

Where are you in relationships? *Pro 13:20 He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed..... Psa 119:63 I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.* The company that you keep will affect the person that you become (or perhaps show the person that you have become). The Moral degeneration of the past half century shows how what was once unacceptable is now de rigueur, standard. There are very few who stand against the tide.

I cannot understand why people patronise the foul mouthed and abusive Gordon Ramsay's restaurants? I can only think that it reflects something in our culture about aggressiveness and its acceptability. These people can never be God's children without a great conversion. *Mat 5:9 Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God..... Pro 22:24 Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go:*

A few years ago it was remarked to me by a family, when they attended a Fellowship barbecue, how nice it was to go to an event where people were not being rude and abusive to each other. They could have sensible conversations. We should look to keep good company and we should judge friendship by what good people are putting into our lives. *Pro 22:11 The king is the friend of all who are sincere and speak with kindness.* What do your "friends" feed you with?

The Bible warns us to examine our friendships because there is a health warning. *Rom 16:17 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.*

Albert Einstein said that "God always takes the simplest way." I think that God wants us to do the same.

Pro 17:3 Silver and gold are tested by flames of fire

Pro 17:3 Silver and gold are tested by flames of fire; our thoughts are tested by the LORD.

Fire and the Lord have similar properties. Fire tests the quality of Gold and Silver to see if it is genuine. The Lord tests our hearts or thoughts that are our innermost being. God has given us an ability to test the things of life. *1Co 2:16 For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.* We have the mind of the Creator and it is not unreasonable that we should see things as He does.

What was it that stopped you believing in Santa Clause if you ever did?

1. **Physics:** Burning a wish list up the chimney is a one way ticket.
2. **World view:** There are more kids than you realise. He couldn't get to them all.
3. **Logistics:** How could one man deliver millions of presents in a 5hr window?
4. **Chemistry:** Huge quantities of sherry and mince pies would kill him.
5. **Biomechanics:** The only thing that could make reindeer fly is a jet engine or wings.
6. **Architecture:** How can a fat man get down a chimney?

As you grew, you realise that the complexity of the issue makes it impossible within the known laws of the Universe. We reject it despite its seasonal appeal. We have tested the idea.

Evolution is a similar fantasy, which if we test it within the known laws of the Universe, falls apart like the belief in Santa! I want to share some thoughts with you that I read in "Creative Defence" by Nicholas Comninellis MD. You can get the book from Amazon:

<https://www.amazon.com/Creative-Defense-Evidence-Against-Evolution/dp/0890513570>

1. P221. The 3 levels of confidence. Evolution is not a Theory. It is less than that, it is a hypothesis.
2. P 208. The Universe is "just right" for life and God is really intelligent.
3. P 206. The Lobsters eyes works differently to our eyes, it is a reflector not a refractor. It was used as a model for an x-ray telescope.
4. P46. DNA is so remarkable that a teaspoon could hold the DNA of every species of creature that ever lived on earth.
5. P51. What is the smallest (minimum) amount of information that needs to appear at one time to make a self replicating organism? 256 genes.
6. P135. A Big bang does not produce order.
7. P139. The Quantum fluctuation.
8. P110. Dating is inaccurate. The 27,000 year old living snail.
9. P142. The Oort cloud myth and the origin of comets.
10. P181. How much evidence do we have for the evolution of man? Not much.

Charles Darwin rejected Christianity about 20 years before he published "Origins".

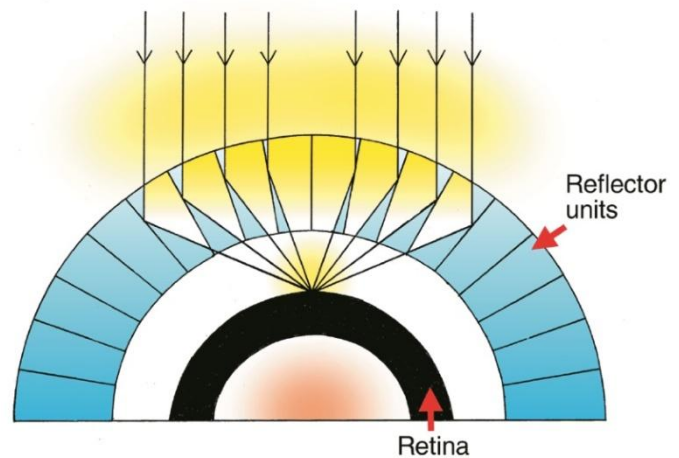
"I can indeed hardly see how anyone ought to wish Christianity to be true, for if so the plain language of the text seems to show that the men who do not believe and this would include my father, brother and almost all my best friends, will be everlastingly punished. And this is a damnable Doctrine."

Darwin wrote as an unbeliever and as such it is not surprising that he arrived at the conclusions he did. He did not have the mind of Christ. At the time Darwinism was challenged by science more so than the church. There is not one piece of scientific evidence in his book to demonstrate evolution but it has become an urban myth. In a BBC news report on Darwin's missing note book the reporter said that when Darwin landed on the Galapagos Islands he saw the proof of evolution. Such is the power of myths....but God tests the heart.

The Lobster's eye:

The lobster eye is composed of numerous squares. These well-arranged squares are in fact the ends of tiny square tubes. The sides of each one of these square tubes are like mirrors that reflect the incoming light. This reflected light is focused onto the retina flawlessly. The sides of the tubes inside the eye are lodged at such perfect angles that they all focus onto a single point.

It is obvious that the design in the lobster eye presents a great difficulty for the theory of evolution. Most importantly, it exemplifies the concept of "irreducible complexity." If even one of its features—such as the facets of the eye, which are perfect squares, the mirrored sides of each unit, or the retina layer at the back—were eliminated, the eye could never function. Therefore, it is impossible to maintain that the eye evolved step-by-step. It is scientifically unjustifiable to argue that such a perfect design as this could have come about haphazardly. It is quite clear that the lobster eye was created as a miraculous system.



One can find further traits in the lobster's eye that nullify the assertions of evolutionists. An interesting fact emerges when one looks at creatures with similar eye structures. The reflecting eye, of which the lobster's eye was one example and is found in only one group of crustaceans, the so-called long-bodied decapods. This family includes the lobsters, the prawns and the shrimp.

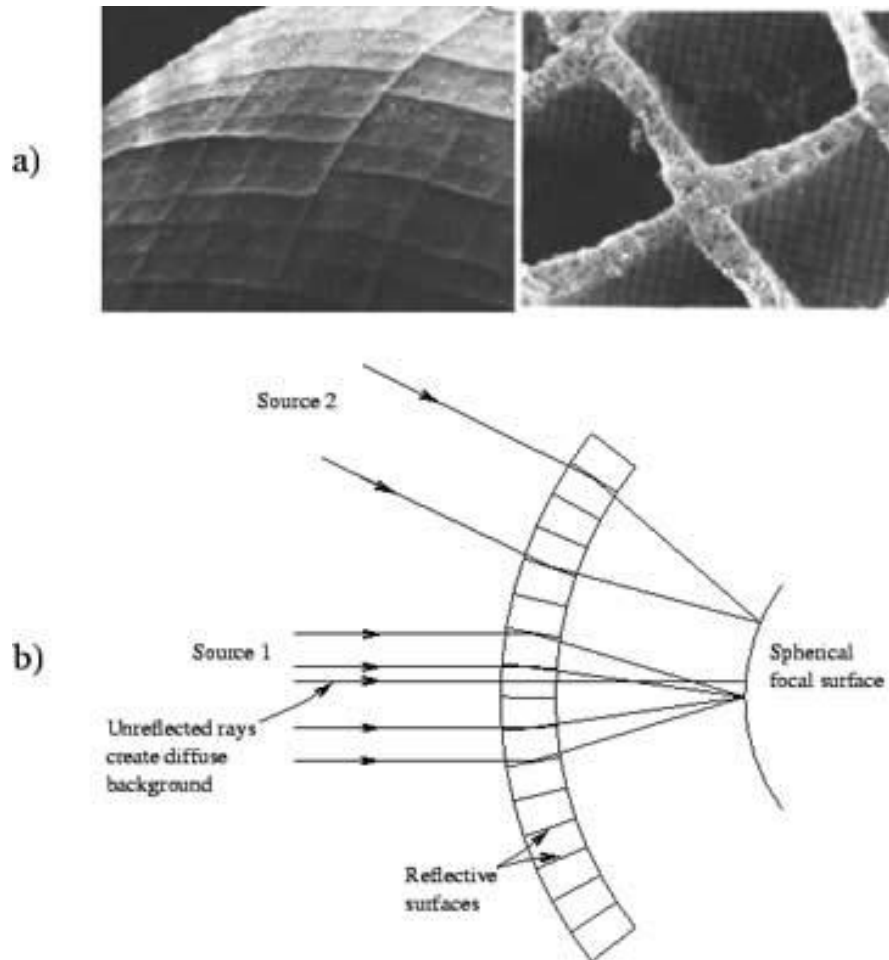
The other members of the crustacean class display the "refracting type eye structure," which works on completely different principles from those of the reflecting type. Here the eye is made up of hundreds of cells like a honeycomb. Unlike the square cells in a lobster eye these cells are either hexagonal or round. Furthermore instead of reflecting light, small lenses in the cells refract the light onto the focus on the retina.

The majority of crustaceans have the refracting eye structure. On the contrary only one group of the crustaceans, namely the long-bodied decapods have reflecting eyes. According to evolutionist assumptions all the creatures within the class Crustacea should have evolved from the same ancestor. Therefore evolutionists claim that reflecting eye evolved from a refracting eye, which is far more common among the crustacea and of a fundamentally simpler design.

However such reasoning is impossible because both eye structures function perfectly within their own systems and have no room for any "transitional" phase. A crustacean would be left sightless and would be eliminated by natural selection if the refracting lens in its eye were to diminish and be replaced by reflecting mirrored surfaces.

It is therefore certain that both of these eye structures were designed and created separately. There is such superb geometric precision in these eyes that entertaining the possibility of "coincidence" is simply ludicrous. We can encounter such miracles as these regardless of what we examine in the

world of creation. Just like the rest of the miracles of creation the lobster's eye structure is an open testimony to our Lord's boundless power to create flawlessly.



Pro 17:5 By insulting the poor, you insult your Creator.

Pro 17:5 By insulting the poor, you insult your Creator. You will be punished if you make fun of someone in trouble.

Godly compassion is in short supply these days. Certainly many of the TV shows thrive on a lack of compassion and the audiences lap it up. Getting your come-uppance is a source of delight. Jesus was though a compassionate man. *Mat 9:36 But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.* Jesus often fed the genuine poor.

Why did God invent poverty? *1Sa 2:7 The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up.* We might say, "If you don't like poverty, it doesn't take much to get rid of it", which is of

course the devil's answer. *Mat 4:3 And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.*

Yes we could live in a world of never failing harvests, of healthy well nourished and well provided for people but there are some very strict conditions for entering that sort of world. *Rev 22:2 In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month:* It is Eden reclaimed.

What changed everything was sin. Sin removed the sustaining grace of God. *Gen 3:18 Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee...* The world and the environment began degenerating. At the cellular level man who had an original design life of 1,000 years, over a few millennia saw that stripped to 70 years. The global upheaval that resulted in a destructive flood because... *Gen 6:6 And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth.* The climate and structure of earth following that event was irrevocably changed and we suffer the consequences today.

Of the 7 billion people on earth over a quarter are classified as living in poverty, that is living below \$1.25/day income. Others in our country whose income is 60% of the average income are said to be poor. Poverty is one consequence of sin that God reveals to us to remind us of what we have lost.

God aligns Himself with the poor and takes their side so that "By insulting the poor, you insult your Creator". We are made extremely uncomfortable by scenes of poverty. It will often generate giving on a grand scale to rid our conscience of the dreadful scenes in Darfur or Ethiopia.

When disaster strikes and the Red Cross become involved, their humanitarian aid deals with the basic needs of shelter and food. After a few days they give the survivors packets of seeds. These seeds are to encourage hope that they can resume life again. It is a lovely thought.

The circumstances of poverty are regulated by God. It is a serious issue and no laughing matter for you will be punished if you make fun of someone in trouble. In these uncertain times we should do well to follow Paul's advice. *Gal 2:10 They only asked us to remember the poor, and that was something I had always been eager to do.*

It may not be long before we are joining the ranks of the poor especially if the greedy bankers have their way.

Pro 17:6 Children's children are the crown of old men

Pro 17:6 Children's children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers. AV Pro 17:6 Grandparents are proud of their grandchildren, and children should be proud of their parents. CEV.

This verse makes two points.

1. Children should be proud of their parents rather than their grandparents.
2. Grandparents seem more proud of their grandchildren than their children

Why should children be proud of their parents, why should the parents be a glory or crown to them? I do not think that most children have a clue what parents do for them. How much do you think you cost? It has been found that the average parent will now pay £193,772 bringing up one child from birth until the age of 21. That's some sacrifice.

Perhaps our failing as parents is that we do not involve our children in the day to day realities of life so that when they are unappreciative we have ourselves to blame? I reflect back on my own upbringing (and I think that I was privileged, certainly much more so than my parents) and I took it for granted. I didn't know the sacrifices and efforts my dad had made and that was largely because he never spoke about it.

What do your parents do for you (make a list)? Are you grateful and do you thank them? We can and should teach gratitude because it is a Christian duty. *1Th 5:18 In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.* The Greek word for thanksgiving is literally Eucharist (a word we use for the Lord's Table).

The verse doesn't say that parents should be proud of their children but I suppose that goes without saying? Why else would you do so much for them with so little given in return? I observe every year in my garden how the parent birds work themselves ragged to give their offspring a chance in life and so to a degree it is with us.

Invariably our children themselves become parents and it is at this stage you can begin to determine how successful you have been in raising your children. Have they gone off with your values and manners? This I think becomes clearer when you see how they in turn raise their children.

Our verse says that grandchildren are the crown (or adornment) of grandparents. I think that it is again an obvious statement that grandparents love their grandchildren but are their grandchildren an adornment? Has it all been worthwhile? There is a website devoted to this subject called "Proud Grandparents" full of wholesome and practical advice. Yet the thing which really matters is not the material success of the grandchildren for that is a fading crown for you. Surely the writer had more in mind than that?

Mar 8:36 For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? I am sure that Timothy's grandmother Lois spent time investing the boy with something lasting. The trouble with most of us is that we have too much focus on the now and not enough on the future. The fluff and feather generation. *2Ti 1:5 When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.2Ti 3:15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.*

We shall all receive a crown. *1Pe 5:4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.* Will the grandchildren have the same crown?

Grandchildren are more likely to have characteristics of their grandparents than their parents.

Pro 17:9 You will keep your friends if you forgive them

Pro 17:9 You will keep your friends if you forgive them, but you will lose your friends if you keep talking about what they did wrong..... Pro 17:17 A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.

I have coupled these two verses on friendship. They show what a friend is, what a friend does and how to treat a friend.

What is a friend? A friend is someone who will love you whatever the circumstances. There are those people who are called “fair weather” friends. They come out when things are going well but disappear when you are in trouble. They hide from you. *Jas 2:23 And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.* It doesn't say that God was Abraham's friend but that Abraham was God's friend. God was always there for Abraham. Let us remind ourselves that whatever earthly friends we have and however loving they are, there is none more so than Jesus. What a friend we have in Jesus!

What a friend does: A brother is born for adversity. Friends are not just for good times in fact they are for the worst of situations.

There is no circumstance that a friend would avoid. It is the greatest love. *Joh 15:13 Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.* One of the greatest examples of this is the death of the hymn writer PP Bliss who burned in a train crash.

On Friday afternoon December 29 1876, at eight o'clock that evening while approaching Ashtabula station (Ohio) and crossing a ravine, the bridge gave way and the train with its precious freight of human lives was precipitated to the bottom.

“When the train fell, Mr. Bliss succeeded in crawling through a window, supposing he could pull his wife and children after him. But they were jammed fast and every effort of his was unavailing. The car was all jammed up and the lady and her children were caught in the ironwork of the seats. Finding that he could not save them he stayed there with them and died.”

How to treat a friend: We can now return to the first verse. It reminds us that if we value friendship we must treat it right. One of the biggest destroyers of friendships is bringing up the past. You will lose your friends if you keep talking about what they did wrong. Its the same in marriage. Words that rake up the past show that the past has not been dealt with and it is still an annoyance to you.

Jas 5:20 Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins. We should not say that sins are unimportant in the face of love and love is more important. Sin must be dealt with but like God we move on. *Jer 31:34 for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.*

Can you imagine what life would be like if God kept reminding you of your sins? *Psa 130:3 If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?* Life would be unbearable. Friends do not do this to you. When someone brings up some event in your past, which God has forgiven in Christ..., you know that person is not a friend. They are enemies of Christ.

Pro 17:13 Whoso rewardeth evil for good

Pro 17:13 Whoso rewardeth evil for good, evil shall not depart from his house. Pro 17:13 You will always have trouble if you are mean to those who are good to you.

If we fly in the face of good and reward it with evil then we shall suffer. Edmund Burke suggested that all it requires for evil to prevail is for good men to do nothing. That is not what is said here. It is that evil will prevail if we pay back good deeds with evil deeds. It is a law of retribution. We might say it has a parallel in the 2nd Law of Thermodynamics (increasing disorder). Everything God made had within its manufacture the Divine goodness. *Gen 1:31 And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.*

We live in the best Universe possible. There is even scientific evidence that we live in the centre of that Universe. We are marvellously created to enjoy that Universe but the original sin that rewarded God's goodness with evil invoked the decline. *Gen 3:17 cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.* That is the 2nd Law of Thermodynamics.

God gave Moses a sight of the Divine good. *Exo 33:19 And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee,* The goodness of God (Hebrew טובי) has in its meaning beauty and welfare. God's goodness holds the decaying fabric of the Universe together. We see this goodness in practice as care for others, meeting the needs of others by getting out of our own box.

David experienced goodness being thrown back in his face as evil, many times in his life. *Psa 109:5 And they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love.* King Saul was one of those whose ingratitude and jealousy would pursue David to the grave if he could. *1Sa 19:1 And Saul spake to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants, that they should kill David.*

Saul's ingratitude also alienated God. *1Sa 15:17 And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight.* Ultimately disowned and friendless Saul reaps what he has planted in life and brings down his own house even the next generation. *2Sa 21:9 And he delivered them into the hands of the Gibeonites, and they hanged them in the hill before the LORD: and they fell all seven together, and were put to death in the days of harvest*

Another enemy was Nabal (1 Sam 25) who were it not for the wisdom of Abigail his wife have destroyed his whole house. Ahithophel was a counsellor of David. His advice was so good that it was said of him that "the advice of Ahithophel was like that of one who inquires of God." *2 Sam 16:23 But he became angry and bitter against David and when Absalom made war with his father,*

Ahithophel joined Absalom's side. David prayed that Ahithophel's advice would be foolish and when Absalom did not follow his advice he knew Absalom could not win so he went home put his business in order and killed himself. This is the result of bitterness.

Much of the evil in our lives is self generated and self inflicted. It destroys us.

Pro 17:15 The LORD doesn't like those who defend the guilty or condemn the innocent.

Three stories in the news (January 2010) this week have engendered controversy about this very issue. What is interesting is to see what people actually defend or condemn. What do you think? The Iraq enquiry is first. "This isn't about a lie, or a conspiracy, or a deceit, or a deception, this is a decision," said Blair who initially looked nervous but grew more confident as the hearing went on. "And the decision I had to take was, given Saddam's history, given his use of chemical weapons, given the over 1 million people whose deaths he caused, given 10 years of breaking U.N. resolutions, could we take the risk of this man reconstituting his weapons programme?"

Was Saddam innocent or guilty? Who was the judge and where was the court? Who invited the action? In none of this do we see any Divine inspiration to act. It is down to politics and self interest. There are a lot of people we don't like but that doesn't give us the right to go out and kill them. What do you think?

My second story relates to MP's expenses. Labour peer Lord Falconer has warned against "treating all MPs as bad" after the expenses scandal. Speaking on BBC One's Question Time Lord Falconer said that despite a loss of confidence in Westminster "we have an essentially incorrupt parliament". Again we have the propaganda from within the organisation. However an astonishing 389 MPs - more than half the total have been told to repay money. In other words a majority fiddled yet in essence it is not corrupt and not all MP's are bad!

Again as with Iraq an independent judicial review should decide guilt or innocence. For a former Lord Chancellor to comment at this stage seems wrong. To mount a defence of this institution seems an election ploy. The public will no doubt give its view. What do you think?

My third story is about John Terry. The judge's lifting of the super-injunction that had prevented the media from exposing John Terry's alleged affair has been greeted with enthusiastic predictions that the law on privacy, saviour of many misbehaving celebrities, had suffered a significant defeat at the hands of freedom of the press. Newspapers would in future be legally entitled to lay bare the adulterous liaisons and naughty antics of the famous.

The "righteous" newspapers sell copy because there is a public demand for salacious gossip. Why else would you buy the Sun or the News of the World? With such intellectual headlines as "Freddy Star ate my Hamster" which would no doubt trouble us all and "Harry the Nazi", people are sucked into rubbish.

Pro 17:16 Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom

Pro 17:16 Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it? Pro 17:16 Why should fools have money for an education when they refuse to learn?

I want to start by giving you an anecdote about a man called John Brown who lived at Haddington in Scotland. He showed that people, even the most disadvantaged who want to learn can do so with God's help. I can cite my father who left school at 14 and sprayed dummies in a shop window later went on to pay his own way through night school and become a Chartered Mechanical Engineer. Learning is about appreciativeness, desire, motivation and doggedness. I think that our verse encompasses the idea in Matthew. *Mat 7:6 Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.* A good idea can backfire and do the exact opposite of what you want to achieve.

Now our verse is about people who don't care for an education. Why give it to them? New Living Translation (©2007) *It is senseless to pay tuition to educate a fool, since he has no heart for learning.* Would you give your hard earned money to a lost cause? There is no point because it yields nothing. It is putting money in an account with negative interest.

God did not make a one size fits all world. It is diverse and every human on the planet is different but identifiable. People are as a result not equal (Talents) but God does not condone the lazy. *Mat 25:14 For the kingdom of heaven is as a.....* Indolence is punished and never rewarded by God. *Mat 25:30 And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.* It is lost upon him. *Mat 25:13 Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.* *Mat 25:14 For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.* *Mat 25:29 For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.* *Mat 25:30 And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

Compassion on the helpless and the hapless is one thing. Compassion on the lazy and idle is something else. It is also senseless to feed lazy people. *2Th 3:10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.* The Christian ethic is very realistic. You cannot afford to support idleness because it will destroy your enterprise. *Pro 24:30 I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down.* You cannot pay cheques with nothing in the Bank. What culture have we created?

I have learned many lessons in giving. One is that people will take anything that is free and requires minimal personal effort. "What have you got for me?" is the watchword of the beggar. I have seen street children who ask for money and walk away when you ask them "why aren't you in school?"

"That ain't workin' that's the way you do it Money for nothin' and your chicks for free" goes the song. Another is that people often want things but are not prepared to contribute anything

themselves. This shows a lack of commitment and the likelihood is that if you gave to this it would be spent elsewhere.

If you want to make a difference with what God has given you then start by understanding God's rules of giving. God has given us an insight into the human souls that will help us navigate this life. It will guide us through foolishness and the snares of sin. If we think that we know better than God or can do better we are not worthy of the Name of Christ.

John Brown was born in 1722 at a time of Drummers War in North America and the death of great Emperor Kangxi of China. John was the son of a weaver and charged with a humble faith in Christian belief given by his parents. Not being people of wealth John had to content himself with the basics of learning and love of the Bible.

At the age of eleven his father died and not long after his mother also died. Fortunately a Shepherd named John Ogilvie looked after him and taught him his trade. While tending the sheep on the banks of the river he taught himself Latin and the fundamentals of Greek.

It seemed he heard of a book in Greek/Latin Parallel a New Testament being sold in a town over twenty miles away. His friend took over the flock as John strode off in the late evening. Next morning at the opening of the shop he asked for the Book. The shop owner asked what good would it do him? Others of learning entered the shop and listened to the conversation. One gentleman asked John to read the words of the Book aloud to prove he was able to understand Greek. This he did and was given the book as a reward for his learning capabilities. Hebrew and many other languages were added to his skills. His notoriety as an interpreter of the old languages caused some jealousy and earned him the reputation of a follower of satan. On being so charged he was examined and found to be innocent of the allegations.

He carried with him his clear and happy optimism of Christian belief as he travelled as a packman. At the onset of Jacobite rebellion in 1745 he served on the side of the King as a member of the garrison at Edinburgh Castle. In 1748 he advanced to become a teacher and found many a young man ready to follow his example into the Church.

John entered the Ministry and became a Pastor of Haddington in 1751 but the appreciation of his preaching in Stow made him a parson in both Churches. He married Janet Thomson of Musselburgh and had two sons to be managed on a stipend of £50 per year.

Rising early each morning he added to his knowledge in reading whatever he could. Soon excelling in languages covering Persian, French, Italian and German to name only a few while also reaching into Philosophy and History. He was elected as a Professor of Divinity by the Synod in 1768 and taught classes including 30 students in his own Haddington. Two of the most popular books he wrote were the Dictionary of the Holy Bible and the Self Interpreting Bible. Typical of this selfless man he only received a minimal amount of money and wrote the sought after copies out by himself.

His fame spread far and wide yet he seemed to find peace in his home town. America beckoned with the Dutch Reform Church offering the post of Professor of Divinity, which he refused presumably for

a multiple of reasons. It may be he held a love of his parish, a concern for his children or his failing health.

Two years after the death of his first wife Janet in 1771 he married Violet Croumbie and had four sons and two daughters. Two sons followed him into ecclesiastics and began a line of distinguished People.

John Brown died on 19th June 1787 and left a heritage of hope and devotion. He also left a trail of modern admirers, some his descendants who desire information on his life and achievements.

Pro 17:17 A friend is always a friend

Pro 17:17 A friend is always a friend, and relatives are born to share our troubles. CEV Pro 17:17 A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.

According to the Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, friendship is a distinctively personal relationship that is grounded in a concern on the part of each friend for the welfare of the other, for the other's sake and that involves some degree of intimacy. On the basis of that definition I wonder how many friends you think you have? I have many acquaintances through work but very few people I would call "friend".

I don't call them "friend" because I am not prepared to open my life up to them. That would involve "trust" which they have not earned. Friendship is something that mutually develops over time, acquaintanceship springs up over night. Is Facebook a symptom of a world crying for friendship?

Sometimes friendship may exceed family relationships as Jesus said. *Joh 15:14 Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.* We see that Jesus regarded family and friends as those who obeyed God. *Mar 3:33 And he answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren?* I think it is in this sense that Jesus meant; *Mat 10:37 He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.*

Friendship is a priority relationship of earned trust, commitment to principal and undying loyalty. The essence of friendship is given here in the words "at all times". That means there is not a situation or occasion that a friend would not be there with you. "A true friend is someone who thinks that you are a good egg even though he knows that you are slightly cracked." - Bernard Meltzer.

That is a wonderful observation, especially to those who seek friends in "perfect" people. If perfection in someone else is where you set the bar in friendship, you will always be disappointed. Look at it another way. Are you the "perfect" friend? Have you no cracks or flaws that would disqualify you? If you seek perfection in others, do you present it in yourself? Do you have the standards that you expect in others? *Mat 7:5 Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.*

Friendship is not about perfection or perfect relationships. Sometimes there are things that you may disagree with in your friend and you must say so to deliver him. A person who is not your friend will gladly see you trip and fall, not so a friend. It may be painful to do but that is what a friend is for. *Pro 27:6 Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.* It is a measure of the level of friendship that you can actually do this.

Friendship should also strengthen you. *Pro 27:17 Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.* So it was that Joshua's friends strengthened him. *Deu 3:28 But charge Joshua, and encourage him, and strengthen him: for he shall go over before this people, and he shall cause them to inherit the land which thou shalt see.*

True friendship is not easy but it is sustaining and it will make a better person of you. I would also suggest that if you cannot view the person you would marry as a friend, then don't marry them!

Marriage has to be the biggest friendship.

Pro 17:18 Its stupid to guarantee someone else's loan.

Pro 17:18 Its stupid to guarantee someone else's loan. CEV Pro 17:18 A man void of understanding striketh hands, and becometh surety in the presence of his friend.AV

"Greece must consider a fire sale of land, historic buildings and art works to cut its debts", two rightwing German politicians said. Opinion polls show Germans are overwhelmingly against a Berlin-funded bailout. Greece's deficit (EUR 29.4bn) was 12.7% of national income in 2009 well ahead of the EU's 3% limit. This story reminded me of a comic character called "Billy Bunter", the fat owl of the Remove as he was known. He was allowed very little pocket money by his father so was constantly attempting to raise a loan on the strength of the legendary postal order he perpetually claims to be expecting.

Guaranteeing loans is a gamble. *Pro 6:1 My child, suppose you agree to pay the debt of someone, who cannot repay a loan.* Firstly one should always ask what a person wants a loan for because it may be some trivial consumable rather than an investment. Will there be anything of value to redeem if they cannot pay back or just a pile of empty beer cans? That's why interest rates are often so high because they cover the losses due to bad payments.

Lending money or guaranteeing money is a risky business. The Jews became famous or rather infamous as greedy money lenders and terms such as Fagin and Shylock have entered our vocabulary. This was certainly not the case in terms of loans within the Jewish community. *Exo 22:25 If thou lend money to any of my people that is poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as an usurer, neither shalt thou lay upon him usury.* They made their profits from the gentiles.

They also introduced a pledge system similar to that used in Pawn brokers. A pawnbroker (or pawnshop) is an individual or business that offers secured loans to people with items of personal property used as collateral. The word pawn is derived from the Latin pignus, for pledge and the

items having been pawned to the broker are themselves called pledges or pawns or simply the collateral. It makes a lot of sense to lend only as much as the value you can sell the pledge for.

God did not encourage speculation on an uncertain future. And all loans that were secured had a run time of 7 years. *Deu 15:1 At the end of every seven years thou shalt make a release.* This statute of limitation discouraged exploitation.

Unfettered loans are a road to perdition as the Greeks are finding out. They have borrowed more than they can payback so the idea of selling off the islands makes sense. It is a bit like repossessing a house when the mortgage payments are not made. You see the same thing in football clubs today.

God does not like irresponsible lending and He does not like irresponsible borrowing, especially the obligations it can produce. Debt was not encouraged. *Pro 22:7 The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.* And again. *Rom 13:8 Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.*

Of course there are many ways to help people in need such as a gifts, time, skill and knowledge. This verse however warns against careless loans that could damage your financial health. Human greed is something that crosses all cultures. *1Ti 6:10 For the love of money is the root of all evil.* Greedy people, selfish people, will not care about you once they have what they want. Billy Bunter doesn't pay you back.

Pro 17:19 The wicked and the proud love trouble

Pro 17:19 The wicked and the proud love trouble and keep begging to be hurt.

There was a young man we knew who never learned much from Sunday school and unfortunately, he ended up in prison and when there, was separated from other prisoners because of his overtly racist provocations. He was separated for his own safety. Why do the wicked beg to be hurt?

We would call this masochism or sadomasochism, terms derived from the two authors' names, Marquis de Sade and Leopold von Sacher-Masoch respectively, based on their popular writings (S&M). Sade was incarcerated in various prisons and in an insane asylum for about 32 years of his life. This degeneracy springs from a judicial punishment from God. *Rom 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;*

This is not a genetic defect although it might spring from the nurture and environment that people develop in. They grow into a world without God. Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (1844 –1900) was a 19th-century German philosopher. He called himself "the Anti-Christ," and wrote a book by that title. Nietzsche was a favourite philosopher of Nazi Germany.

Nietzsche claimed the death of God would eventually lead to the loss of any universal perspective on things and along with it any coherent sense of objective truth. What will replace God? The same being who will replace man, the Übermensch or the Superman. On January 3, 1889 Nietzsche

suffered a mental collapse and died a year later. He died insane, in an asylum, of syphilis - signing his last letters "the Crucified One."

I see Nietzsche's philosophy totally in harmony with the evolutionary view of life without God. It describes it perfectly. Nazi Germany suffered the consequences of our Proverb, they loved trouble. In a world where God has been rejected where do we get our rules from? When we make ourselves God, we become the superman creating laws and rights for other men. There is only one right in the Bible. *Rev 22:14 Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.* Human rights made by man are a myth.

Perhaps in this insanity of a world without God where we scratch to find meaning, where terms like beauty and love serve no purpose, is it so unusual that men should turn to self-harm and self-destruction in a desperate cry for help?

According to the Royal College of Psychiatry someone who self-harms will usually do it in a state of high emotion, distress and unbearable inner turmoil. Some people plan it in advance, others do it suddenly. Some people self-harm only once or twice but others do it regularly, it can become almost like an addiction. Self-harm can help you to feel in control and reduce uncomfortable feelings of tension and distress. If you feel guilty it can be a way of punishing yourself and relieving your guilt. Either way, it can become a 'quick fix' for feeling bad.

People who "keep begging to be hurt" are it seems suffering the absence of Christ in their lives. Nietzsche said "A casual stroll through the lunatic asylum shows that faith does not prove anything". Well for him it did not and that's where he ended his days, mentally broken, riddled with syphilis, a man for all his words and genius without hope and with nothing to give to those who would follow his insanity.

Men are by nature lunatics who need their minds restoring. Jesus alone does that. *Mar 5:15 And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.* Yes, they had every right to be afraid...Our God is an awesome God. The God of Sanity.

Pro 17:24 Wisdom is before him that hath understanding

Pro 17:24 Wisdom is before him that hath understanding; but the eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth.

This verse is about focus in life and the different perspectives that the wise and the fool have. The fool looks all over the earth to find wisdom whereas those with understanding only have to look in front of their own eyes. This is what I think Augustine meant when he wrote "*Men go abroad to wonder at the heights of mountains, at the huge waves of the sea, at the long courses of the rivers, at the vast compass of the ocean, at the circular motions of the stars, and they pass by themselves without wondering*".

We need go no further than a skin cell before our own eyes, to see unfold the handwriting of our creator. Within that microcosm lies in perfect order the information that describes me. *Psa 139:16 Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.* Yet men will look everywhere else to find proof of life rather than the Creators hand. Truly the eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth. *Pro 15:14 The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge: but the mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness.*

When men want to believe something and they will lose all reason in pursuit of their goal. Evolution has no scientific basis at all yet is it believed. It is believed in spite of the fact that there is no known law in nature that creates information out of matter. No law by which atoms write information. The belief that life can arise spontaneously is as stupid as the belief that the Bible should suddenly appear written on that wall but God can write on walls and did.

The fool is everywhere with his thoughts except where he ought to be. Leaving out of view that which lies nearest the fool flutters about fantastically from one thing to another and that which is to him precisely of least importance interests him the most.

Natural sciences (physics, chemistry, biology etc) explore the world about us in an attempt to describe the order in nature. Solomon was a scientist. *1Ki 4:29 And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore. 1Ki 4:30 And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. 1Ki 4:31 For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol: and his fame was in all nations round about. 1Ki 4:32 And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five. 1Ki 4:33 And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes.*

Man has since his creation tried to understand his place in the Universe. He applies his mind to the task of exploring the things that he sees and formulates them into a system of belief. *Psa 8:3 When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?* The speculation about the meaning of life is called philosophy.

Again there is a great danger that we wander into the realms of speculation rather than science. We saw the self-destructive philosophy of Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche and his philosophy of life. It differs greatly from the life view of the Apostle Paul. *Wisdom is before him that hath understanding; but the eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth.* What should we believe? Philosophies are not provable by science because they do not employ the scientific method. You cannot prove the existence of God because there are no scientific tests to which you can subject God. God is not subject to us.

Why then did we arrive at an acceptance of Christian philosophy as opposed to that of unbelieving philosophy such as Nietzsche? It is because the Spirit of God has done a work in our lives to change

our world view. *Tit 3:5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; It was a spiritual conversion. It was a rebirth 1Pe 1:23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.*

Now where am I going with this thought? It is this, if we have been renewed we must examine all of our old beliefs in the light of this new life. We must begin the process of weeding out the lies that were sown in our lives. Yet it goes even further. We must be careful that we do not bring into our faith a compromise between the way the world thinks and the way Christ thinks. We must not create a synthesis between Christ and the world. *Luk 16:13 No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other.*

You would not drink filthy polluted water would you? Why then would you drink the filthy polluted ideas of sinful men? *Eph 2:1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.* Devilish men do not think the thoughts of Christ and they certainly will not encourage you to think them. They will be out to spoil you. Wisdom is before him that hath understanding but the eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth.

What the Christian William Law wrote two centuries ago is even more evident today, "Man needs to be saved from his own wisdom as much as from his own righteousness, for they produce one and the same corruption".

One of the current invaders into Christian thinking is psychotherapy or therapy for the soul. The history of psychology as a scholarly study of the mind and behaviour dates back to the Ancient Greeks. There is also evidence of psychological thought in ancient Egypt. Psychology was a branch of philosophy until 1879 when psychology developed as an independent scientific discipline in Germany and the United States. Psychotherapy or personal counselling with a psychotherapist is an intentional interpersonal relationship used by trained psychotherapists to aid a client or patient in problems of living.

Sigmund Freud was the founder of this false science and he built on the legacy of Darwin and Nietzsche. Once God was dead man had to sort his own salvation out. What people fail to appreciate is that much of Freud's theory about dream interpretation is derived from his occult research. He also spent considerable effort investigating the phenomena of mental telepathy and thought transference. He was also a practitioner of the Tarot.

Psychotherapy is invading churches. It is, as if for ages, we have been unable to solve the deeper issues of Christian life without it (for example Ruth Graham forgiving her father Billy Graham for being absent in her childhood). It is as if we have had to "make do" until psychotherapy arrived. *Eph 4:11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and*

teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: This clearly is not good enough for today.

It is as if the Bible should have said “and he gave some Social Workers, some counsellors, some care assistants, some psychotherapists and social services for..... the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry and for the edifying of the body of Christ

If you drink this filthy water it will injure you. I want to give you some examples of what the subtle deceits of psychotherapy and secular counselling will do to your faith. I point out that it is mainline Christians who have swallowed this camel, men like James Dobson, Selwyn Hughes also organisations like Spurgeon’s college who run courses to gain accreditation with the British Association for Counselling and Therapy. I hear what you are thinking, “surely these people cannot be misguided?” Can’t they?

I do not have time to be exhaustive so I will take an example from the book “Insight into self-esteem” a book published by The Crusade for World Revival (just down the road in Waverley Abbey, Farnham). It is on the subject of self-esteem. (Quotes from the Dark Side of Christian Counselling by Dr E S Williams p 124ff ... buy and read!).

Wisdom is before him that hath understanding; but the eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth. Beware what you take in. Let me set before you 4 myths of Psychology/Psychotherapy:

- The first major myth is common to Christians and non-Christians alike is that psychotherapy (psychological counselling along with its theories and techniques) is a science - a means of understanding and helping humanity based on empirical evidence gleaned from measurable and consistent data. **It is not.**
- The second major myth is that the best kind of counselling utilises both psychology and the Bible. Psychologists who also claim to be Christians generally **claim that they are more qualified to help people understand themselves** and change their behaviour than are other Christians (including pastors and elders) who are not trained in psychology.
- The third major myth is that people who are experiencing mental-emotional behavioural problems are mentally ill. They are supposedly psychologically sick and therefore need psychological therapy. The common argument is that the doctor treats the body, the minister treats the spirit and the psychologist treats the mind and emotions. Ministers, unless they are trained in psychoanalysis and psychotherapy are then supposedly unqualified to help people who are suffering from serious problems of living. **Tell that to Jesus!**
- The fourth major myth is that psychotherapy has a high record of success - that professional psychological counselling produces greater results than other forms of help, such as self-help or that provided by family, friends or pastors. Thus, psychological counselling is seen as more effective than Biblical counselling in helping some Christians.

This is one of the main reasons why so many professing Christians are training to become psychotherapists.

Our text warns us to be careful where we seek wisdom *Pro 17:24 Wisdom is before him that hath understanding; but the eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth.*

Rom 10:6 But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

Pro 17:27 He that hath knowledge spareth his words

Pro 17:27 He that hath knowledge spareth his words: and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit. AV Pro 17:27 It makes a lot of sense to be a person of few words and to stay calm. CEV

One of my endearing moments of the recent election was the interview between the indefatigable Mrs Gillian Duffy (housewife) and Gordon Brown PM during an election walkabout. Quote: GD: "You can't say anything about the immigrants because you're saying that you're... all these Eastern Europeans what are coming in, where are they flocking from?" Unfortunately, Brown did not switch off his microphone after the interview and called her a bigot.

Mr Brown's apparent deafness for which I have a lot of sympathy leads to the "Bigot gate" remark. Gordon could have "thought" the remarks but instead he spoke them and the microphone was on. The point was that there was disparity or inconsistency between the public conversation and the private remarks. This made people question the genuineness and honesty of Brown.

When Whole Foods arrived in the UK two years ago it was hailed as a Mecca for those determined to follow a healthy diet. But today the struggling US store's chief executive will probably want to eat his words after admitting that alongside the organic carrots and bags of granola, the shops "sell a bunch of junk". Oops too many words!

20 years Gerald Ratner was addressing 5,000 members of the Institute of Directors at the Royal Albert Hall. "We do cut-glass sherry decanters complete with six glasses on a silver-plated tray your butler can serve you drinks on, all for £4.95. People say how can you sell this for such a low price? I say because it is total crap. We even sell a pair of gold earrings for under £1 which is cheaper than a prawn sandwich from Marks & Spencer. But I have to say that the sandwich will probably last longer than the earrings." Oops too many words!

U.S. Presidential candidate Gary Hart offered a challenge to reporters asking questions about his track record of philandering. "Follow me around...If anybody wants to put a tail on me go ahead. They'd be very bored." One reporter did take up the offer and wasn't bored. Gary was soon

discovered with a lovely young woman and it wasn't his wife. His presidential campaign faltered. Oops too many words. I had the right to remain silent...but I didn't have the ability said - Ron White.

I suppose it is one of the arts or crafty devices of modern journalism to get people to say too much. The tongue is mightier than sword (I remake the saying from): *Pro 12:18 Sharp words cut like a sword, but words of wisdom heal* and its power is described by James: *Jas 3:8 But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.*

The tongue is a key subject in the book of Proverbs:

- *Pro 6:17 A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,*
- *Pro 6:24 To keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman.*
- *Pro 10:20 The tongue of the just is as choice silver: the heart of the wicked is little worth.*
- *Pro 10:31 The mouth of the just bringeth forth wisdom: but the froward tongue shall be cut out.*
- *Pro 12:18 There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise is health.*
- *Pro 12:19 The lip of truth shall be established for ever: but a lying tongue is but for a moment.*
- *Pro 15:2 The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness.*
- *Pro 15:4 A wholesome tongue is a tree of life: but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit.*
- *Pro 16:1 The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the LORD.*
- *Pro 17:4 A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips; and a liar giveth ear to a naughty tongue.*
- *Pro 17:20 He that hath a froward heart findeth no good: and he that hath a perverse tongue falleth into mischief.*
- *Pro 18:21 Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.*
- *Pro 21:6 The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death.*
- *Pro 21:23 Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles.*
- *Pro 25:15 By long forbearing is a prince persuaded, and a soft tongue breaketh the bone.*
- *Pro 25:23 The north wind driveth away rain: so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue.*
- *Pro 26:28 A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it; and a flattering mouth worketh ruin.*
- *Pro 28:23 He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue.*
- *Pro 31:26 She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness.*

I suppose one lesson is that you should always be honest and that what you say should reflect what you think and do. Deeds and words will match.

However, the greater lesson is to know when to shut up.

Pro 18:1 Its selfish and stupid to think only of yourself and to sneer at people who have sense

Pro 18:1 Its selfish and stupid to think only of yourself and to sneer at people who have sense. Pro 18:2 Fools have no desire to learn; they would much rather give their own opinion.

These verses sum up the Facebook/YouTube/Twitter generation. We are breeding a generation of “electric” idiots who think that because it appears on a screen it must be real. The lines between fact and fiction blur.

We can see that we live in an age where wisdom and common sense is not in great demand. "Just think how stupid the average person is and then realize that half of them are even stupider!" There is a website “The Darwin Awards” <http://www.darwinawards.com/> that salutes the improvement of the human genome by honouring those who accidentally remove themselves from it. As it says “A Chronicle of Enterprising Demises honouring those who improve the species by accidentally removing themselves from it”! It has lots of interesting true stories.

Like this one...”The ambulance responded to a frantic call concerning a neighbour's trip through an industrial tree shredder. It seems the individual had decided to prune his own trees rather than hire a professional. Why not? After all the local shop rented shredders that could make quick work of yard debris including tree limbs up to 8 inches in diameter. To save time (those fateful words) the neighbour had placed the shredder at the base of a great oak tree where he could drop branches directly into the hopper. He intended to cut off the top third of the oak since it had been killed by lightning. With the shredder running wide open the neighbour climbed his ladder to the first tree branch stepped off the ladder, slipped, and fell. The paramedics found him very dead, half in and half out of the shredder's hopper, one leg shredded to the hip. Not married, no kids, removed self from the gene pool.”

We live in the age of the cult of the amateur. Remember what we read earlier in the year? Climate change policies are claimed to be grounded in scientific knowledge about physical cause and effect and about reliable projections of the future. As opposed to other ways of knowing the world around us - through intuition, inherited belief, myth - such scientific knowledge retains its authority by widespread trust in science's reassuring norms of objectivity, universality and disinterestedness. (Mike Hulme and Jerome Ravetz). It would seem that we should treat empirical science as equally valid with intuition, inherited belief and myth.

How would you begin to tell the difference? Unless you have a grounding in good empirical science you will not be in a position to question the myths and fictions. You will believe that ten foot blue smurfs living on floating islands (the film Avatar) are as real as Zulus. You will believe that atoms organise themselves into men (evolution).

One of the failings of the AQA system of exams is that it fails to examine the reasoning behind the answers. AQA was formerly the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance. Pupils are funnelled in to making A, B, C or D responses. What should be considered is that the underlying method at arriving

at the answer is more important because that can be applied to other issues. The system as it exists does not produce thinkers, it produces pre-programmed pupils filled with other people's opinions.

I also note that many of the teaching posts in today's schools do not require a high academic standard. How can that help you? I want to encourage you especially those of you at school to really make the most of the opportunity you have, not just to learn but to ask questions about what you are being taught. If you wish to have an interesting life, develop a mind that takes interest in what is going on around you.

Pro 18:8 The words of a talebearer are as wounds

Pro 18:8 The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly. AV. Pro 18:8 There's nothing so delicious as the taste of gossip! It melts in your mouth. CEV

There are two sides to this proverb. One is how we react to gossip about others and the other is how we react to gossip about ourselves. I understand that there are some 400 magazines worldwide related to gossip and it may explain the rise of social networking. People just like to know about other people's business. We are quite happy to look into other people's lives but not so keen for them to look into ours. Perhaps that is why net curtains are so popular.

If things about us are true then we have to live with the consequences. However gossip may spread untruths and these are like tattoos that stay with us for life. Give a dog a bad name and hang him. The principle is that a person's plight is hopeless once his reputation has been blackened. It is similar to the saying that "he that has an ill name is half hanged". Gossip is both tasty and malicious. We need also to distinguish between what is constructive and informative and what is tittle tattle for its own sake.

For example:

- Was Paul gossiping when he reported Peter's dramatic failure in Galatians? *Gal 2:11 But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.*
- Was Luke gossiping when he tells the debilitating and embarrassing story of Peter's triple denial of Jesus "behind his back"? *Luk 22:54 Then took they him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off. Luk 22:55 And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them. Luk 22:56 But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him. Luk 22:57 And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not. Luk 22:58 And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. Luk 22:59 And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him: for he is a Galilaean. Luk 22:60 And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. Luk 22:61 And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock*

crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. Luk 22:62 And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.

- Was Jesus gossiping when he said "negative" things behind the backs of Herod, the Pharisees, the Teachers of the Law, and the Sadducees? *Mar 8:15 And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod. Mat 12:38 Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. Mat 12:39 But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: Mat 12:40 For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. Luk 20:45 Then in the audience of all the people he said unto his disciples, Luk 20:46 Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts; Luk 20:47 Which devour widows' houses, and for a shew make long prayers: the same shall receive greater damnation. Mat 16:6 Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.*

All of these examples above are a practical warning about wrong behaviour. They require the detail to make the point. Some subjects are irrelevant to us and serve no purpose other than to titillate and pass time. Clearly some things should remain secret as they serve no purpose. *Pro 20:19 He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: Are there things in your life that you do not wish people to know, things from a past that has been redeemed by Christ? How would you feel if that past were publicly revealed? I think this is what is meant by Pro 10:12 Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins.*

Gossip fuels the fires of strife. *Pro 26:20 Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth.* We need to be clear where the line is between News and Gossip, Science and Opinion. Hippocrates observed "There are in fact two things, science and opinion; the former begets knowledge, the latter ignorance".

I personally like to be informed. I also find it increasingly harder to make that distinction between truth and opinion or even truth badly portrayed. The story last week about synthetic life was just such an example. Whether an organism reusing everything from a natural cell but the genome should be called "synthetic life" is open to debate. Even the DNA they used was **not** made from scratch <http://www.theguardian.com/science/2010/may/20/craig-venter-synthetic-life-form>.

It already existed, so we are in reality looking at genetic manipulation. I came across a fraud yesterday that was perpetrated in the name of science by a psychologist called Cyril Burt (the 11 plus scandal that was based on eugenics and much of his work was unable to be repeated, hence allegations of fraud). Twenty-four years after psychologist Cyril Burt died, why should anyone care whether he falsified his data? In 1979, Leslie Hearnshaw published an authoritative biography. He had access to private papers and concluded that Burt had indeed made up data on twins showing that IQ was about 70 per cent heritable.

As a preacher it is my duty to present truth. *Ecc 12:10 The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth.* If we all do this it will generate conflict but then, we should expect that in a world where Satan controls the unbeliever. *Joh 8:44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.*

The devil energises the sinner. *Eph 2:2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:* He will plant falsehood and the desire for gossip and half truths.

It is a sign of what the devil feeds his children upon.

Pro 18:9 He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster.

Pro 18:9 Being lazy is no different from being a troublemaker. CEV

This is a timely reminder as exams approach about being lazy and about what we do in life. Lazy is not Godly.

Have you heard of the phrase Victorian work ethic? It was something that characterised the age especially among the middle classes and permeated down to the working classes. They encouraged hard work, respectability, social deference and religious conformity, something vanishing rapidly from our age. Today you get paid if you are able bodied and lazy because its your human right. Well its not one of God's rights.

The work ethic is very much in line with the idea in Thessalonians. *2Th 3:10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.* Let me put it another way. God says don't feed lazy people who don't want to work. If you do you are disobeying God. This is not about not being kind to the helpless poor. It is about being righteous with the lazy work shy. Here is a good form of non-violent child discipline. You don't clear up your mess you do not get a meal! Quid pro quo. Parents will find this hard but that is a reflection of how they have become influenced by human rights so much so that the child has more rights than the parent. The tail wags the dog.

Pro 21:25 The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labour. Pro 12:27 The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting: but the substance of a diligent man is precious. Slothful people are people who don't look after themselves. If it wasn't for the care of others they would look like a tramp. Here is a thought. Here is something you can test. What do you contribute in your home without being asked? Its obvious what needs doing. Do you ever ask what you can contribute without being prompted? No. Then you are a lazy passenger. You are the subject of our text today. The Bible is talking about you and to you.

Isaac Watts wrote a song about sluggards based on Proverbs. *Pro 26:14 As the door turneth upon his hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed.*

"'Tis the voice of the sluggard; I heard him complain, You have waked me too soon, I must slumber again; As the door on its hinges, so he on his bed Turns his sides, and his shoulders, and his heavy head." You can almost hear the door creaking on its hinges. Sluggards are great procrastinators. That word comes from the Latin "to put off until tomorrow". It puts off paying bills, returning library books or things borrowed. It puts off duties to others, putting new tyres on your car, getting a tooth filled to avoid decay, doing homework on the morning it should be handed in, leaving things to the very last moment that makes life difficult for others. Lazy people are thoughtless troublemakers. *Pro 18:9 Being lazy is no different from being a troublemaker.*

Lazy people are careless people. They have no care for others and no care for themselves. They will become the old and the smelly. *Rom 12:10 Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;* The Christian virtue opposed to laziness is diligence. Getting out of your box and seeing how you can do more for others.

You will hear this term a lot in your lifetime - Due Diligence. Due diligence is a term used for a number of concepts involving either the performance of an investigation of a business or person prior to signing of a contract or the performance of an act with a certain standard of care. In these cases it does not matter that you did not intend to do wrong or were unaware of requirements, the fact that you have contravened the law is sufficient to allow a Court to convict. Due diligence balances this and is a defence in law. To use this defence a person must prove that he took all reasonable steps and exercised all due diligence to avoid committing the offence. For example hiring tree shredders to unskilled children or un-roadworthy vehicles to a customer.

Due diligence is about not being lazy and neglecting your duty of care for yourself and others. So when you are asked to go and study, do a good job and work hard for your own benefit. God will bless and help you if you ask.

Pro 18:10 The name of the LORD is a strong tower

Pro 18:10 The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe. The rich man's wealth is his strong city, and as an high wall in his own conceit. AV. Pro 18:10 The LORD is a mighty tower where his people can run for safety - the rich think their money is a wall of protection. CEV

This is a tale of two Cities. What will you do the day money fails? No..... Money isn't going to fail....is it? The book of Revelation (Chapter 18) predicts the day of bankruptcy. In the days of Joseph money failed. "Can it happen again?" you ask. Yes. The real question is "Are you prepared?"

Scripture teaches that money failed in the land of Egypt and Canaan during the life of Joseph. Pharaoh had a dream no one could interpret except Joseph. In Pharaoh's dream there would be

seven years of “great plenty” followed by “seven years of famine.” The famine would be so bad that “all the plenty would be forgotten and the land consumed.” Pharaoh’s advisers could not interpret the dream but God’s man Joseph could. Not only did Joseph interpret the dream but offered a solution that would save the nation from total starvation.

Here was his three-point plan:

1. “Look out a man discreet and wise” and set him over the land of Egypt with governing authority to oversee the strategy.
2. Appoint more officers (overseers) over the land to ensure results.
3. Store 20 percent of the land’s production in the seven prosperous years.

Gen 41:33 Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. Gen 41:34 Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years.

There were seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine. During a famine the ability to produce goods and services are drastically reduced, the division of labour falls apart, distribution networks fail, governments default on promises, crime rises and fear sweeps the land. When this famine hit Egypt the major concern became food not consumer products.

It was at this time a great transference of wealth took place in Egypt. Because of the wisdom of the Holy Spirit guiding Joseph there was enough food stored in the cities to sustain the people. Sustain however with a price. Joseph didn’t give the people food, he sold it to them. Not for money however but for assets. Remember money failed.

The truth is that God gives wisdom not corrupt career politicians that don’t believe in God or His relevance to modern society. The further our nation gets away from Jesus the more perilous times become. We may even find ourselves waking up one morning only to discover that money failed. We can see how opposite to Joseph our economists are. Print money they say, be prudent says Joseph.

Clearly, God has shown through history that those who think that they are protected because they have money are wrong. It is as if God will make it fail to make a point. The rich think their money is a wall of protection. People who use money as a barrier to protect themselves from life rather than an asset to further the lives of others have missed the point. A medal was struck in Germany in 1923 to commemorate the fact that “on the 1st November 1923 1 pound of bread cost 3 billion, 1 pound of meat 36 billion and 1 glass of beer 4 billion”. The German mark went from 68.4 for a US dollar in 1920 to 4,200,000,000,000 marks for a dollar in 1923. The currency was worthless. It took 3 days for prices to double in 1923.

Couldn’t happen again? Check out Zimbabwe. 79,600,000,000% highest monthly inflation, 98.0% daily inflation with 24.7 hours required for prices to double. God doesn’t say that He will keep the Christian out of danger or make them inflation proof but He does say that He will keep them safe in Him. He is a strong tower. When bad things happen, Christians are comforted in Him. *Psa 73:17 Until*

I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Psa 73:18 Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors.

No terror for the Righteous!

Pro 18:11 The rich man's wealth is his strong city

Pro 18:11 The rich man's wealth is his strong city, and as an high wall in his own conceit.

What is best to be rich or poor? What we might ask is it to be rich and poor? Perhaps we should define riches and poverty by what they do to a person? Material riches and poverty are things which affect our lives now, but naked we come and naked we go. *Job 1:21 And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.* Someone described it as womb, gloom and tomb.

Did the wealth of the ruler make it difficult to enter God's kingdom? *Mat 19:16 And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? Mat 19:17 And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. Mat 19:18 He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Mat 19:19 Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Mat 19:20 The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? Mat 19:21 Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.* No it did not. It was the man's attitude to the wealth he possessed. Some people do really nice things with their money.

For example, John T Walton Age 58. Second of three sons of Wal-Mart Stores founder Sam Walton, died in a plane crash last summer. He had served on Wal-Mart's board since 1992. He also served in the U.S. Army Green Berets as a medic during the Vietnam War, and was awarded the Silver Star. He devoted much of his life to philanthropy, co-founder of the Children's Scholarship Fund, an organization that provides tuition assistance to low-income families to enrol their children in private schools.

Others use their wealth to indulge their passions and do nothing for others, what is the value added to their eternal life? *Jas 2:14 What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? Jas 2:15 If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, Jas 2:16 And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Pro 28:27 He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack: but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse.*

Poverty may also be a stumbling block to enter the kingdom. People may be so burdened with finding the next meal that they have no time for God. The desperation of poverty may render the soul helpless and cast down. The destruction of the poor is their poverty.

The proverb is giving us advice. Poverty is not a good thing although the poor will always be with us and riches can become a wall behind which we hide rather than a platform from which we can work.

I wonder how men will answer to God for their use of their blessings in this life? Paul suggests that we answer for our stewardship. *1Co 3:14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. 1Co 3:15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.* This is nothing to do with the judgement of sin. *Rom 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* It is about how we used the opportunities of life.

I would encourage us all and especially the younger amongst us with their lives ahead of them, to think how they will use their time and wealth. Will it be for self or will there be something for others?

If there is any reason to get riches, I would say that it is for the purpose of helping others not for the purpose of acquiring goods and services for self. *Pro 10:16 The labour of the righteous tendeth to life: the fruit of the wicked to sin.* We need to develop the right balance as the writer of our Proverbs observes. *Pro 30:8 Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me:*

Pro 18:14 The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity

Pro 18:14 The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear? AV Pro 18:14 Being cheerful helps when we are sick, but nothing helps when we give up. CEV

Psychosomatic illness is defined as an illness relating to a disorder having physical symptoms but originating from mental or emotional causes. Is there any physiological basis for this belief? Does what we think and believe affect our well being? *Psalm 32:3 When I kept silent, my bones grew old Through my groaning all the day long. Psalm 32:4 For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was turned into the drought of summer. Selah.* David's sin was weighing him down with physical symptoms.

Perhaps there are more moral causes for illness than we know. Healing may be a result of resolving sin. *Jas 5:16 Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.* Is this really farfetched? Does the mind affect the matter of the body? The Bible says yes. *2Sa 13:2 And Amnon was so vexed, that he fell sick for his sister Tamar; for she was a virgin; and Amnon thought it hard for him to do any thing to her.* "Love sickness" has physical symptoms.

How do we explain Jesus sweating blood? *Luk 22:43 And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it*

were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. Hematidrosis (also called hematohidrosis) is a very rare condition in which a human being sweats blood. Around the sweat glands there are multiple blood vessels in a net-like form. Under the pressure of great stress the vessels constrict. Then as the anxiety passes the blood vessels dilate to the point of rupture. The blood goes into the sweat glands. As the sweat glands are producing a lot of sweat it pushes the blood to the surface, coming out as droplets of blood mixed with sweat. Doctors have observed this with soldiers preparing for battle.

Ever heard of “White Coat Hypertension” more commonly known as White Coat Syndrome? It is a phenomenon in which patients’ exhibit elevated blood pressure in a clinical setting but not in other settings. It is believed that this is due to the anxiety some people experience during a clinic visit.

The mind is a powerful tool and our beliefs can give us powers of recovery. Being cheerful helps when we are sick. Having a positive attitude can make you feel well. Look at Paul’s positive attitude. *2Co 4:8 We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;* Survival has a lot to do with positive attitudes. Survival depends a great deal on a person's ability to withstand stress in emergency situations. Your brain is without doubt your best survival tool. It is your most valuable asset in a survival situation. It isn't always the physically strong who are the most effective or better at handling fear in emergency situations. Survival more often depends on the individual's reactions to stress than upon the danger, terrain or nature of the emergency. To adapt is to live. Mental skills are much more important than physical skills in survival situations.

The power of the mind is often used to test the value of medicines. Placebo comes from the Latin “I shall please” an innocuous or inert medication, given as a pacifier or to the control group in experiments on the efficacy of a drug to reinforce a patient's expectation to get well. According to a University of Michigan study published in 2005 issue of The Journal of Neuroscience, patients who believe they are taking painkillers feel better even if there truly is no medication in their dose. Researchers gave the study participants a salt water injection that caused jaw pain. Then the participants were told that they were being given a painkiller when actually it was a placebo. The participants were asked questions and their brain activity monitored and evaluated. Each of the participants released more natural painkilling endorphins from their brains after being given the placebo.

The value of a drug or medicine is often tested against a placebo. If the effect of the drug exceeds the benefit of a Placebo by a certain percentage it may be accepted as a treatment. However the Bible gives us a key to wellbeing. *Pro 18:14 The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity;* That spirit should be taking large doses of Scripture.

Pro 18:16 A man's gift maketh room for him

Pro 18:16 A man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men.

This verse is about preparation and thoughtfulness. It shows that being properly prepared will get you into the presence of greatness. Important people are often overburdened. *Exo 18:13 And it came*

to pass on the morrow, that Moses sat to judge the people: and the people stood by Moses from the morning unto the evening. Their time is precious and limited and people are more likely to want something than to give something.

The preparation of a gift sends a message that I come to see you, I offer respect to you and I come to give more than take. Such a person is more welcome for their thoughtfulness than being just another visitor on the make. These gifts show respect and honour not familiarity. Other types of giving (birthdays, Christmas) are out of obligation rather than special respect. They are seasonal, social pressure types of giving. Here we are dealing with the practice of thoughtfulness and respect.

The queen of Sheba prepared to see Solomon. *1Ki 10:1 And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD, she came to prove him with hard questions. 1Ki 10:2 And she came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bare spices, and very much gold, and precious stones: and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart. 1Ki 10:3 And Solomon told her all her questions: there was not any thing hid from the king, which he told her not.*

Such thoughtfulness was shown by the woman who came to Jesus. She prepared herself to see Jesus. She thought about the gift and spent generously. The gift was in a manner, the reflection of her value of the person she was honouring. *Luk 7:37 And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, Luk 7:38 And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.* We note also that she gave out of love not out of bribery.

There were those present who thought such giving was excessive. *Mar 14:4 And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made? Mar 14:5 For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her.* Jesus did not agree with them. When it comes to giving many people will look for a cheap gift rather than a thoughtful gift but not this woman. I do not know about you but the gifts that I have appreciated most of all were those that came with thoughtfulness.

Do you come before God with a gift? For many this has become the weekly collection in church. I never heard that God was short of money or that He asked for collections in the worship service. He does love “givers”. *2Co 9:7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.* Giving to the poor is giving to God. *Pro 19:17 He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.*

In the Old Testament men made sacrifices or gifts to God. These were not always compulsory. *Lev 7:16 But if the sacrifice of his offering be a vow, or a voluntary offering, it shall be eaten the same day that he offereth his sacrifice: and on the morrow also the remainder of it shall be eaten:*

Let us remind ourselves of something. We cannot come into the presence of God empty handed. Every time you go you must bring something precious. Do you prepare to go into the presence of God or do you just run in? Do you come "in Jesus name" and present Him before you present you?

Joh 14:13 And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

Preparation pays.

Pro 18:18 The lot causeth contentions to cease

Pro 18:18 The lot causeth contentions to cease, and parteth between the mighty. AV Pro 18:18 Drawing straws is one way to settle a difficult case. CEV

Some issues are so hard to resolve we might use the phrase "its six of one and half a dozen of the other". Two things which people refer to differently are actually the same thing. "I say she's a stewardess. She says she's a flight attendant. Its six of one, a half-dozen of the other." Although something has been said in two different ways they ultimately mean the same thing.

I think that lots or so called chance is a way of solving particular issues like this. Its not the only way (as Solomon showed) and it is not a substitute for laziness in approaching problem solving. In using chance or the toss of a coin we are employing the unknown and unpredictable element in happenings that seems to have no assignable cause.

Yet even in what we call chance the hand of God appears. *Pro 16:33 The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD.* Even in events where we think that we are using a random choice generator God is tipping the balance. Darwinism has long being interpreted as a view of nature as based upon "chance". Chemicals get lucky and organise themselves. Darwin wanted God out of the frame because he didn't trust God. Darwin wrote to a friend Asa Gray, the American botanist, "I cannot persuade myself that a beneficent God would have designedly created the Ichneumonidae with the express intention of their feeding within the living body of caterpillars".

We might extend Darwin's thought to the design of the malarial parasite that kills millions each year, the design of the HIV virus, the design of disease, bacteria, cholera, plague and so on. We cannot attribute this to chance beyond God's control because God controls chance. A Jewish proverb says "that if God lived in the world, people would break His windows". People suffer and so would retaliate back if they could by breaking God's windows. Yet the status quo or what life is is not to be interpreted by our squeamishness. It is red in tooth and claw. We cannot say that there is no Creator because some of the outcomes are to us horrific.

We try to view these tragedies in statistical terms to try and give them some rational basis. We consider that the 1 trillion plasmodium falciparum parasites in a human victim may just mutate and create resistance to drugs. We use unimaginably high numbers as a measure of possibility. We try to explain life's horrors in lottery terms. We even start to say that life is a lottery and its a lottery whether you get good genes or not.

But life is far from a lottery. You are exactly what God intended you to be down to the last atom. David speaks in a time before science. *Psa 139:16 Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.* God made us all unique, warts and all. *Exo 4:11 And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD?*

Chance, lots, the lottery are not explanations of why things are as they are. They are ways of avoiding the realities of life. They are not facing the issue of a Sovereign God, Creator of Heaven and Earth. We are subject to changes that God set in motion when man rebelled against God. Thorns and thistles and pain in childbirth are part of the legacy of sin. You may ask what chances brought about the tragedies in the news? Monsoon floods that displace millions, fires in Russia, Volcanoes, murders and so on. It was not chance it was planned.

Mat 24:5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. Mat 24:6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. Mat 24:7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. Mat 24:8 All these are the beginning of sorrows. I'm glad its not down to chance because that means all's well and the Universe is being controlled by God.

Tim Tebow



In 2010 a new rule for the next NCAA football season dubbed "The Tebow Rule" by media because it would have affected him, banned messages on eye paint. During his college football career Tebow frequently wore Biblical verses on his eye black. In the 2009 BCS Championship Game, he wore John 3:16 on his eye paint and as a result, 92 million people Googled "John 3:16" during or shortly after the game. Additionally, later when Tebow switched to another verse there were 3.43 million

searches of "Tim Tebow" and "Proverbs 3:5-6" together. *Joh 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life..... Pro 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. Pro 3:6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths*

Tebow stated of the searches "It just goes to show you the influence and the platform that you have as a student-athlete and as a quarterback at Florida".

The NFL already has a rule like this in prohibiting players from wearing messages on eye black, so Tebow would not be able to continue the practice in the NFL.

Pro 18:19 Making up with a friend you have offended is harder than breaking through a city wall

Pro 18:19 Making up with a friend you have offended is harder than breaking through a city wall.

Make your words good - you will be glad you did. Words can bring death or life! Talk too much and you will eat everything you say.

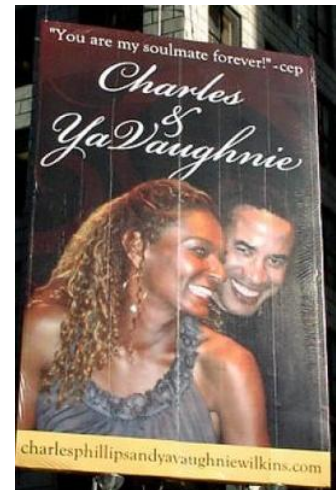
We should ask what would offend a friend. Surely friendship by definition weathers such storms? There are proverbs declaring the strengths of friendships. *Pro 17:17 A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity. Pro 27:6 Faithful are the wounds of a friend; Pro 27:17 Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.*

In the light of these we may have thought that a friendship is indestructible, so what destroys a friendship? I think that the core value of a friendship is trust and loyalty. I suppose that could also be summed up in reliability? Friendship is about trust building over time and that displays the quality of loyalty or support. Friendships open up very personal areas of our lives. They share intimate confidences that would not be shared normally.

I don't think that correcting a friend is a bad thing or breaks a relationship. It should build it after all we are constantly corrected by the Lord. *Heb 12:6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.* What we cannot abide is betrayal. The breaking of that confidence that we regarded as sacred to friendship. To me it is this single feature that will determine the value of a relationship and define friendship. *Pro 11:13 A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter. Pro 18:8 The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.*

This trust is especially made clear in marriage and is fundamental to a secure marriage. *Pro 31:11 The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her.* Break this trust and prepare to unleash hell! William Congreve the playwright said "Heaven has no rage like love to hatred turned, nor hell a fury like a woman scorned."

Look at these examples. A slew of giant billboards have popped up in New York, San Francisco and Atlanta featuring a mysterious couple, Charles E. Phillips and YaVaughnie Wilkins. The signs spotlight an oversize image of the couple cuddling along with the words “You are my soulmate forever! - CEP” and a link to a bizarre website littered with love notes and romantic pictures of the canoodlers (The site, charlesphillipsandyavaughniewilkins.com has now been shut down). There’s only one little problem. Charles is the co-president of software giant Oracle and on the board of President Obama’s economic recovery team. YaVaughnie is not his wife. YaVaughnie Wilkins is said to have been paid £150,000 to reveal her relationship with Charles Phillips to the world after he went back to his wife.



Sir Peter Graham Moon moved a younger woman into the couple’s Berkshire village. When he failed to turn up to see his wife one day she calmly snipped the sleeves off 32 of his Saville Row suits, trashed his BMW with a can of white paint and deposited rare wines from his cellar on doorsteps around the village like a milkman.

The offences clearly led to anger and retaliation. It was not something that could be let go without a protest. The actions of these women although different carried the same message. “You betrayed me, you betrayed our trust”. Having gone to the level of retaliation that they did it almost sends the message that the relationship is so broken it cannot be mended.

The damage that the men did was reflected in the damage that the women inflicted on them. The women had expectations that the relationships encouraged. *Pro 18:19 Making up with a friend you have offended is harder than breaking through a city wall.* Friendship is like a marriage. God is not pleased when we abuse friendships because faithfulness is a divine attribute.

Mal 2:14 And why isn't God pleased? Its because he knows that each of you men has been unfaithful to the wife you married when you were young. You promised that she would be your partner, but now you have broken that promise.

Pro 18:22 Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing

Pro 18:22 Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD. Pro 18:22 A man's greatest treasure is his wife-- she is a gift from the LORD. CEV

It was in the creative plan to show that males were neither complete nor blessed alone. Life on earth can reproduce asexually and it is not essential that two separate organisms are required for reproduction. Parthenogenesis does occur. Yet God put this complex system together not for biological design purposes but for a moral purpose.

Marriage with all its troubles and embarrassments is a blessing from God and there are few cases where a wife of any sort is not better than none, because celibacy is an evil (except given by God), for God himself hath said, “It is not good for man to be alone.” Imagine a world without women, well it

was for a very short time as if to make the statement that a woman's role is important. Eve was God's gift to Adam.

There is also in the creation of Eve a glimpse of the Divine nature of unity in plurality. Just as the Son Jesus proceeds from His father, so Eve proceeds from Adam yet remains one with Him. *Gen 2:24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.* Men have a duty to marry and not live forever with mum and dad. They also have a duty to find a godly wife. *2Co 6:14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: Don't get tied up with a godless wife and make your choice carefully.*

Yet far better ask God to present that wife to you and make it a matter of your daily prayers. Man obtains her not by his own diligence but by God's good providence. *Pro 12:4 A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband: but she that maketh ashamed is as rottenness in his bones.*

In the light of God's words it is difficult to see why man relegated woman to a lesser role. If creation moved in steps to its pinnacle it was not man who was last framed as the pinnacle but woman. When Peter speaks of the woman he describes her as "weaker". *1Pe 3:7 Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel...* He does so in terms that recognise their physicality not their capability or morality. She is less physically strong but not weak in mind. There was never a good reason for women not having equality in society or not having the right to vote. In some ways man has taken away from woman the role that God gave them and women have largely accepted that.

Proverbs 31 is the A to Z of a good wife but I find nothing in the Bible that describes the virtues of a good man in this detail. I say A to Z because the verses are acrostic in the Hebrew and each starts with a different letter of the alphabet. Embedded in that Proverb are the qualities of a good wife. This is something young men should familiarise themselves with.

Women tend to take these verses for themselves as an example but I think that Lemuel wrote them for men. It was a record of what Lemuel's mother taught him to look for in a good woman. This is a mother's advice to her son! Have you mothers ever taken that task to hand and shown your sons what to look for in a good wife (or do they just see the things not to look for)? It will be no use complaining if they bring home a girl without virtues if you never taught them.

And while we are at it let's thank God for Lemuel's mother. That godly woman has enriched our language and guided our hearts through the wisdom of God. She is an example to all mothers of a good woman and also how mothers should be to their sons.

People say that one of the biggest purchases of your life is a house. They are wrong. It is a good wife because she has more value than precious stones. Making a mistake here can be a very costly error. So be encouraged by the Proverb to look for a "good wife" and thereby obtain God's favour. Set the bar high and you will not be disappointed.

Out there is a girl you will marry. Make sure it is the one God chooses.

Example of an acrostic by Isaac Watts

I am a vile polluted lump of earth;
So I've continued ever since my birth;
Although Jehovah grace does daily give me,
As sure as this monster Satan will deceive me.
Come therefore, Lord, from Satan's claws relieve me.

Wash me in thy blood, O Christ,
And grace divine impart;
Then search and try the corners of my heart,
That I in all things may be fit to do
Service to Thee, and sing thy praises too.

1681 aged 7 years

Proverbs 31

*Pro 31:10 Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. **Value***

Pro 31:11 The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil.

Faithful

*Pro 31:12 She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. **Honest***

*Pro 31:13 She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. **Diligent***

*Pro 31:14 She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar. **Provider***

*Pro 31:15 She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens. **Leads***

Pro 31:16 She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.

Business minded.

*Pro 31:17 She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms. **Worker***

*Pro 31:18 She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night. **Watchful***

*Pro 31:19 She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. **Capable***

Pro 31:20 She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.

Charitable

*Pro 31:21 She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet. **Foresight***

*Pro 31:22 She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple. **Skilled***

*Pro 31:23 Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land. **Publicist***

*Pro 31:24 She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant. **Financier***

*Pro 31:25 Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come. **Virtuous***

*Pro 31:26 She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. **Wise***

Pro 31:27 She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.

Proactive

Pro 31:28 Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her.

Praiseworthy

*Pro 31:29 Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. **Excellence***

*Pro 31:30 Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised. **Godly***

Pro 31:31 Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates.
Praiseworthy

Pro 18:24 A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly

Pro 18:24 A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. AV Pro 18:24 Some friends don't help, but a true friend is closer than your own family. CEV

We spoke of friendships and that it is a delicate and precious relationship. It strikes me that we don't often create friendships in families. We are in families by opportunity of birth but does that mean we have an automatic friendship? Family relationships tend to be peer relationships. Dad and mum are in charge and you do what you are told. Its not much different to the relationship with your boss or a slave.

Relationships according to Jesus are not genetic links they are moral links. Perhaps this is why Jesus made the remarks He did. *Luk 8:20 And it was told him by certain which said, Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to see thee. Luk 8:21 And he answered and said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it.*

For Jesus relationships were based upon the people who were believers and doers. Genetics count for nothing on the day of judgement. Believing parents will see their unbelieving offspring damned and they will accept it. Believing children will see their unbelieving parents damned and accept it.

Genetic links may determine monarchies but they do not make friendships. Genetic links may create obligations. *Exo 20:12 Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.* You can respect a parent or relative but that doesn't mean you want them to come to dinner, to go on holiday with them or spend time with them.

The Bible is littered with treacherous relatives such as Abimelech and treacherous power grabs for example Joseph and Jacob. *Jdg 9:1 And Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal went to Shechem unto his mother's brethren, and communed with them, and with all the family of the house of his mother's father, saying, Jdg 9:2 Speak, I pray you, in the ears of all the men of Shechem, Whether is better for you, either that all the sons of Jerubbaal, which are threescore and ten persons, reign over you, or that one reign over you? remember also that I am your bone and your flesh. Jdg 9:3 And his mother's brethren spake of him in the ears of all the men of Shechem all these words: and their hearts inclined to follow Abimelech; for they said, He is our brother. Jdg 9:4 And they gave him threescore and ten pieces of silver out of the house of Baalberith, wherewith Abimelech hired vain and light persons, which followed him. Jdg 9:5 And he went unto his father's house at Ophrah, and slew his brethren the sons of Jerubbaal, being threescore and ten persons, upon one stone: notwithstanding yet Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left; for he hid himself. Jdg 9:6 And all the men of Shechem gathered together, and all the house of Millo, and went, and made Abimelech king, by the plain of the pillar that was in Shechem. Jdg 9:7 And when they told it to Jotham, he went and stood in the top of mount Gerizim, and lifted up his voice, and cried, and said unto them, Hearken unto me, ye men of Shechem, that God may hearken unto you. Jdg 9:8 The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king*

over them; and they said unto the olive tree, *Reign thou over us.* Jdg 9:9 But the olive tree said unto them, *Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?* Jdg 9:10 And the trees said to the fig tree, *Come thou, and reign over us.* Jdg 9:11 But the fig tree said unto them, *Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees?* Jdg 9:12 Then said the trees unto the vine, *Come thou, and reign over us.* Jdg 9:13 And the vine said unto them, *Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?* Jdg 9:14 Then said all the trees unto the bramble, *Come thou, and reign over us.* Jdg 9:15 And the bramble said unto the trees, *If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow: and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon.* Jdg 9:16 Now therefore, if ye have done truly and sincerely, in that ye have made Abimelech king, and if ye have dealt well with Jerubbaal and his house, and have done unto him according to the deserving of his hands; Jdg 9:17 *(For my father fought for you, and adventured his life far, and delivered you out of the hand of Midian:* Jdg 9:18 *And ye are risen up against my father's house this day, and have slain his sons, threescore and ten persons, upon one stone, and have made Abimelech, the son of his maidservant, king over the men of Shechem, because he is your brother;)* Jdg 9:19 *If ye then have dealt truly and sincerely with Jerubbaal and with his house this day, then rejoice ye in Abimelech, and let him also rejoice in you:* Jdg 9:20 *But if not, let fire come out from Abimelech, and devour the men of Shechem, and the house of Millo; and let fire come out from the men of Shechem, and from the house of Millo, and devour Abimelech.* Jdg 9:21 *And Jotham ran away, and fled, and went to Beer, and dwelt there, for fear of Abimelech his brother.*

Dear Job had his own family problems. *Job 6:15 My brethren have dealt deceitfully as a brook, and as the stream of brooks they pass away;* In other words, their support dried up like a summer stream. So it is no surprise that friends may be closer than relatives... there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

As our Proverb says some friends don't help, that is they are useless to you. There are though good friends that are better than your relatives. There are a few lessons to come out of this.

Firstly develop friendships in families. These are built through love and respect. Supposing you had someone going on at you all the time, pointing out your mistakes and punishing you, would you seriously want that person as a friend? Would you want to be with them or avoid them? I would avoid them. Parents need to consider the limits of their role as parent and their role as friend. You could be a perfect parent but a poor friend.

Secondly friendships should be viewed as close familial relationships. Friends should be like a true brother or sister when developed. If you would not have someone as part of your family then it is likely they could not be a friend.

Thirdly be friendly. Yet in this be careful. *Mat 10:16 Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.* Be friendly but do not bare all at once. King Hezekiah had too open a heart. *2Ki 20:13 And Hezekiah hearkened unto them, and shewed them all the house of his precious things,*

Friendship needs testing. It is a house built brick by brick. The bricks are made of trust. Trust upon trust builds a strong friendship. Yet there is one we must never befriend. *Jas 4:4 know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.*

Our friendship is never with the world or its children. They will by their very nature lead us away from God.

Pro 19:10 It isn't right for a fool to live in luxury or for a slave to rule in place of a king.

Pro 19:10 Delight is not seemly for a fool; much less for a servant to have rule over princes.

Most families who are due to lose their child benefit are worrying about how they'll make ends meet without it. But for Kelly Marshall who has five children by four different fathers, the handout has never been about paying for nappies, food and other everyday expenses. She saved her benefit money to help pay for breast enhancement. As many parents envisage tightening their belts after the Tories announced plans to cut the benefit for higher-rate taxpayers, she plans to save more of hers for liposuction and a tummy tuck.

Miss Marshall, who has never worked, rakes in almost £29,000 a year from benefits - and last year spent £4,500 to go from a 34A to a 34DD. She explained: 'I have wanted a boob job since I was a teen. But it wasn't until I had five children that I could afford it - with all the extra benefits I get. Now I hope to have liposuction, a tummy tuck and regular Botox. I know most people will think it is wrong I am spending taxpayers' money on my looks. But I deserve it because I am a good mum'.

No says the Bible: It isn't right for a fool to live in luxury.

The welfare mentality has become a rights mentality an entitlement generation. The nation owes people. It is no longer a question of welfare as an issue of sustaining life. It is now about welfare sustaining a quality of life on issues that are not life threatening. Government sets an example that where if you max out on your credit card, the solution is to get another credit card. Foolish?

A Cabinet minister has provoked a storm by suggesting that the workshy should stop having children if they cannot afford them. Culture Secretary Jeremy Hunt called on the jobless to take responsibility for their families. He said it was not the duty of the state to fund an increasing number of offspring with benefits.

If you go to the developing world they don't sponsor child welfare because they have enough people. Family allowance was introduced in 1945 in the UK, with the benefit being taxable and paid only for second and subsequent children. Why do you think that it was introduced? It was to top up the birth rate after World War II. If the population is restored then its original purpose no longer exists and it is quite natural to cease it altogether. It was an expedient for the times.

Where does God say that I am obliged to support a family that does not constitute itself under Gods rule? "Five children by four different fathers" is not my responsibility. Where are the 4 fathers? If people commit fornication then I am not obliged to support it, I am obliged to condemn it.

God does not have these people in His house or in His kingdom. Neither should we. *1Co 6:9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, 1Co 6:10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.*

Parishes were the first basic administrative units in Britain and also had a responsibility to their poor. The Elizabethan Poor Law enshrined this right with the practice of less sturdy beggars being sent back to their parish of origin ostensibly for help. At Breconshire the Quarter Sessions Order Book reads as follows: "County - Ordered that Elizabeth Thomas who was taken up as a Sturdy Beggar and having behaved improperly be confined in the House of Correction for one month and whipped during that time." Zero tolerance for the workshy.

In the 19th Century Britain's welfare was characterised by voluntary provision, with mutual and friendly societies delivering a whole range of benefits. Local authorities and voluntarily run hospitals, together with a national system of panel doctors were financed from health insurance contributions, which were set by the state and collected through mutually owned societies. These were nationalised by Lloyd George. He gave those with an existing pension 7 pence for 3 pence! Welfare is a historic moral issue that needs revisiting because "It isn't right for a fool to live in luxury or for a slave to rule in place of a king".

There is no doubt in my mind that we are living in a fools' paradise.

Pro 19:11 The discretion of a man deferreth his anger

Pro 19:11 The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression. AV Pro 19:11 Its wise to be patient and show what you are like by forgiving others. CEV

We might link these verses with the thoughts of our last ministry. Much "so called" discipline arises from anger. Anger is not wrong. *Eph 4:26 Be ye angry, and sin not:* Yes it is right on occasion to be angry. Jesus was angry. *Mar 3:5 And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts.* However anger has a sell by date. *Eph 4:26 let not the sun go down upon your wrath:* Anger like the Manna in the wilderness will turn from something healthy into a can of worms if it is not dealt with. It will become a sinful disposition.

So how much better it is to stand back from the situation and defer anger. How often we would call down the wrath of God on our fellow man. *Luk 9:54 And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? Luk 9:55 But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.*

God's seeming ignoring of the acts of sinful men may in fact be for your own preservation. *1Pe 3:20 when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.* Noah would have perished under the wrath of God if God had not waited for him to finish his task of building the Ark..

Rom 12:19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. The discretion of a man deferreth his anger and that is a divine quality.

It is also a divine quality to forgive and "passover". It is as our text says a glory or an ornament. Probably one of the worst traits of Christians is that they forget where they came from. Peter asked Jesus. *Mat 18:21 Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Mat 18:22 Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.*

The story illustrates the lack of compassion people have. *Mat 18:33 Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee?* It is perhaps why Christianity is often portrayed as hypocritical. Preaching one thing and doing another and undermining the faith. It is hardly an ornament!

I read a wonderful illustration of discretion in the obituary of David Marques who died on September 29 2010, aged 77. When the British Lions party of 1959 landed in the brutal heat of Darwin in northern Australia, one player drew all eyes partly for his height (he was the tallest man in rugby at that time, 6'5") but also for his remarkable attire. Marques emerged from the aircraft garbed in the full gear of a City gent – white shirt and military tie, dark suit, bowler hat and rolled umbrella, the very incarnation of an English aristocrat deigning to set foot in the Colonies.

In an early game of the tour, Marques was punched to the floor some distance from the action, in what is known as an "off-the-ball" incident. He gathered himself up, rose to his full height, "six feet five inches of quivering rectitude", as one writer put it, went over to his assailant and held out his hand in an accommodating gesture that was nervously received. Asked afterwards by his second-row partner, the burly Irishman Bill Mulcahy why he had not punched back, Marques replied drily: "You wouldn't understand, Bill. I wanted him to feel a cad."

The discretion of a man defers his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression. I shall remember this gentleman rugby player as an example of our text. I don't know if he was a Christian but he certainly behaved like one!

Pro 19:13 A foolish son brings disgrace to his father

Pro 19:13 A foolish son brings disgrace to his father. A nagging wife goes on and on like the drip, drip, drip of the rain.

I often find that what is NOT said is as interesting as what is said. It doesn't say a foolish son brings disgrace to his mother or that a nagging husband goes on like the drip of the rain. Mothers are more

accepting of their son's folly. It weighs upon them in a different way. *Pro 10:1 A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.* It is also not in the nature of most men to go on about things, to nag. It might be that women prefer to talk more and I wonder whether this is why gossip columns are mainly for women?

I read this week a story. A robber whose father shopped him to the police after he spotted a CCTV image of him in his local paper, was jailed today. Before he was led away to begin a two year three month sentence, 23-year-old Michael Powell, who has been struggling with a drug problem, accepted his father had done the right thing. Powell was caught on CCTV as he punched an assistant in an off licence and then leapt over the counter and hit him again before snatching money from the till. His mother was not available for comment!

Dads tend to be more proactive in discipline and the dad is less likely to want to be associated with a wayward son. I think that every right minded father would want to utter the words of God about their offspring. *Mat 3:17 This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*

The other thing that men dislike is nagging. The verb "to nag" comes from the Scandinavian word for "to gnaw, nibble or pick at something." Nagging is a term used almost exclusively by men to describe women. Most women deny they nag. They see themselves as reminding the males in their lives to do the things that must be done. Nagging is not good according to the Bible. *Pro 21:9 Its better to stay outside on the roof of your house than to live inside with a nagging wife. Pro 21:19 Its better out in the desert than at home with a nagging, complaining wife. CEV Pro 27:15 The steady dripping of rain and the nagging of a wife are one and the same. Pro 27:16 Its easier to catch the wind or hold olive oil in your hand than to stop a nagging wife.*

It has been the butt of many jokes. Farmer Jake had a nagging wife who made his life miserable. The only real peace that he got was when he was out in the field ploughing. One day when he was out in the field, Jake's wife brought his lunch to him. Then she stayed while he quietly ate and berated him with a constant stream of nagging and complaining. Suddenly Jake's old mule kicked up his back legs, striking the wife in the head and killed her instantly. At the funeral Jake's minister noticed that when the women offered their sympathy to Jake he would nod his head up and down but when the men came up and spoke quietly to him, he would shake his head from side to side. When the funeral was over and all the mourners had left the minister approached Jake and asked, "Why was it that you nodded your head up and down to all the women and shook your head from side to side to all the men?" "Well," Jake replied "the women all said how nice she looked and her dress was so pretty, so I agreed by nodding my head up and down. The men all asked, 'Is that mule for sale?' and I shook my head, no."

It does actually happen. A long-suffering man who was nagged and abused for 30 years before he stabbed his partner to death has been jailed for four years and eight months. Dennis Long, 59, was cleared of murder and convicted of the lesser charge of manslaughter on the grounds of provocation following a trial at Newcastle Crown Court. Despite hating violence, he killed 60-year-old grandmother Judith Scott, the partner he had lived with for three decades after years of abuse which included being beaten with a poker. On the night in March that he snapped at their home in North

Shields, North Tyneside, she had called him weak, 'a pansy', 'a poof' and told him she should wear the trousers and he should be in a dress.

I note that the Bible gives no remedy for nagging. Men! It is inevitable and you will just have to live with it. Perhaps that's why we develop deafness?

Pro 19:14 You may inherit all you own from your parents

Pro 19:14 You may inherit all you own from your parents, but a sensible wife is a gift from the LORD.

"How much did he leave?" asked a mourner as the funeral procession passed by? "All of it", replied his companion. About 1.5 million of us plan to leave our money to our pets. Tiddles and Fido were the sixth most popular beneficiaries. Children were, of course, the most likely to receive an inheritance, with 29 million planning to leave them money, followed by partners or spouses (26 million) and then other relatives (9 million), according to a poll for a financial and legal advice website. Nearly 4.5 million said they intend to leave their money to a charity, while three million plan to name a friend in their wills, the survey revealed.

Here is another example of what is more important in life. God's bequest is a sensible wife. That is a prudent, wise, sensible, intelligent wife (Sensible = Shacal = שכל). There is on the face of it a big difference between how parents would set up their children and how God would set them up. Do you consider the primary duty financial? Have you ever prayed for the wives or husbands to be for your children? Abraham made considerable preparation (Genesis 24) because Abraham understood the nature of the people amongst whom he lived.

Here are some important observations from one of Spurgeon's prayer meeting addresses.

DEAR FRIENDS, — I have here a request for prayer on behalf of one whose name would be recognized by you if I mentioned it, as that of a sister who was a member with us at New Park Street Chapel but who has been away from us for a long time, for alas! She married an unconverted man and suffered the usual consequences that almost always follow in such cases. When I saw her a few days ago she said to me "You do not seem to recollect me Mr. Spurgeon." I replied "No, I do not." That was something very extraordinary for I have a remarkable power of remembering faces that I have once seen. So she said "My name is so-and-so, do you not recollect me now? Oh, yes!" I answered, "I do, but what an altered woman you seem to be! Excuse me making the remark but you seem to have changed much more than I should have thought could have been possible even in so many years."

She had just come out of the infirmary and told me that she must go back again, for she was very, very ill. She wanted me to send somebody to see her while she was in the infirmary and that I promised to do. "But," I asked, "How did you get into such a state as you are now in?" "Oh, sir!" she exclaimed "I married an ungodly man and as the natural result, I had a world of trouble."

This evil is far more common than many people believe. I was talking, this afternoon, with an excellent Christian woman, who is coming to join our church. She also had been passing through very deep waters and she said to me, "I consider that God has been most merciful to me, for I turned aside from Him and from His people, by marrying a very ungodly man." Now happily, the Lord has brought her back. I was talking to Mr. Archibald Brown the other day and he told me that he was visiting lately, in one of the worst slums in the East of London and there he saw a poor woman who had scarcely any clothes upon her and her little children round about her were crying for bread. Mr. Brown said to her, "From your appearance I should judge that you were not always in such depths of poverty as this." The poor woman put her hand inside her dress and drew out a communion card of this church, and said "I used to be a member there, and I always keep that card in memory of what I once enjoyed." "But," inquired Mr. Brown, "How did you get here?" "Oh!" she sorrowfully answered, "I married an ungodly man and that is the top and bottom of all my misery."

Having these cases coming immediately under my own eye or brought before me in the way I have described and all of them having turned out badly, I thought it was my duty to remind all Christian men and Christian women of the warning given by the apostle Paul to the Corinthians.

I recollect a young woman coming to ask my advice about marrying an unconverted man. I soon saw that she had made up her mind, as they mostly do in such cases what she was going to do. What is the use of asking advice when you have made up your mind as to your own course of action? However, she said that such was her influence over the young man in question that she felt certain of bringing him to the Saviour. She has not done so but he has been the means of our losing her from church fellowship and I do not know where she is now. I remember that I said to her "Well, if you believe what you say to be true, I will tell you what to do; go home, and try this little experiment. When the young man comes to see you, climb on the top of the kitchen table and try to pull him up and tell him to see if he can pull you down. If you succeed in pulling him on to the top of the table in spite of all his exertions to drag you down, I think you may safely marry him." Why the result always is and always must be that the one who is down pulls the other down, at least I have always found it so and I have had the painful knowledge of many such cases.

Do not you run such a risk my young friend or you will bitterly repent of it. Even when young women marry young men who are members of the church, it is not always that they make a happy match, for there are men who even become members of a Christian church for the very purpose of winning the heart and hand of another of the members. It is a most grievous thing and a shameful sin and I am sorry to have to say that it has been done sometimes even here. Take care young friends and older ones too, that you keep your eyes open and if the man who desires to be your lover is not a lover of the Lord, do not give your heart to him and my brother if that young woman to whom you are being attracted does not love the Lord, let her find somebody else who will be more

suited to her present condition than you are. I am sure that this warning ought to be laid to heart by all of you who are true Christians. If you are a hypocrite you can get on very well with an unconverted partner in life, but if you are a genuine child of God and you sin in this way, depend upon it that you will get a whipping from your Heavenly Father.

The best thing that can come of such unequal yoking together will be grievous to your own soul and dishonouring to your Lord and Saviour. Remember how the apostle warns us against all wrong association with the ungodly. *“For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”* (“Unequally Yoked Together.” By C H Spurgeon).

Do you believe that? Do you think that you can go against the word of God and win? Do you think that you can even be neutral? God hates neutrality and fence squatters, it makes Him puke. *Rev 3:16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.* Such was the warning to the church in Laodicea.

The yoke of marriage and a good wife (or husband) is something that should be at the top of our prayer list and a subject for discussion in the family. *Deu 6:7 and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.*

I suppose that that also is another sign of our times. We do not talk about religious matters in our families. We do not pray together on matters of importance. The matters that will have the greatest influence on our souls are neglected. We don't hold one family prayer time a week because we rely on “church” to do it for us.

You will see how Spurgeon framed his prayer meeting. It was prayer with a purpose not, let's all sit around thinking what to pray for! He took a Biblical subject, produced living examples to illustrate it and laid down the principles for living it in his church. If your prayers are stale old crusts that you bring out day after day then here is a remedy. If your prayers are just a repetitive list of wants that God alone can supply or so you think, try this. Take a Biblical subject (you will have to read your Bible with purpose rather than habit) and find the application to your family. You should be finding as you grow in the Lord that as a result of this, God will show you more or what you can do for yourself and less of what He should do for you. Prayer is not an alternative to action.

Pro 19:17 He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD

Pro 19:17 He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.

Its official! This week (November 2010), scientists claimed that meanness is genetic. There is a “mean gene”. Around one in four of us carry the 'mean gene', which we have inherited from our parents so they say. Volunteers were given a gambling computer game to play and then told they could donate some or all of their winnings to a poor child in Peru. To tug the heart strings, they were shown a picture of a girl called Lina and a bracelet that she had knitted. The type of COMT gene did not affect how much the men and women won on the gambling game but it did affect how much they gave to charity. More than 20 per cent of those with the 'G' version gave all the cash they had won to Lina but fewer than 2 per cent with the 'A' version were as generous.

What is poor? The widely accepted definition of poverty is having an income which is less than 60% of the national average (excluding the wealthiest members of society). On this measure the proportion of the UK population defined as in poverty is roughly one in five. The absolute amount will differ from country to country. It is a measure of what it costs to function in society.

I think sometimes that one of the ways to tackle poverty is to invest in the overthrow of those regimes that oppress their people. That would at least break the poverty cycle. But what is our text asking us to do? Give Christmas boxes to the third world? Buy an education for a child in Africa? Throw money at some personal adventure that it claims will change lives but has no way of measuring the effect? You are probably already contributing at least £150 a year from tax to the world's poor already and I bet you do not give anywhere near that amount to local charities. So you are already a giver to the poor, perhaps grudgingly.

Our text is not so much about quantitative giving but qualitative giving. It is about our attitude and motivation. Compassion which is the inward principle of charity in the heart is to have pity on the poor. Some have nothing to give but pity, charitable concern and sympathy. *1Co 13:3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing.*

You can give without being charitable. How strange is that? You can give out of obligation but not really out of desire. *2Co 9:7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.* You know what its like, you are out somewhere and a tin rattler (chugger) passes and you feel that you have to put something in so people don't think that you are a meanie. You are in this case giving for the wrong reason. So then if you cannot give for the right reason, don't bother because it will not profit you.

We must not only pity the poor but give, according to their necessity and our ability. *Jas 2:15 If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, Jas 2:16 And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?* I think that we need to be discerning in giving and give to necessity and not to want or desire. People will take anything that's free.

There is also that kindness which looks to meet a situation thoughtfully. *Jer 38:7 Now when Ebedmelech the Ethiopian, one of the eunuchs which was in the king's house, heard that they had put Jeremiah in the dungeon; the king then sitting in the gate of Benjamin; Jer 38:8 Ebedmelech went forth out of the king's house, and spake to the king, saying, Jer 38:9 My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet, whom they have cast into the dungeon; and he is like to die for hunger in the place where he is: for there is no more bread in the city. Jer 38:10 Then the king commanded Ebedmelech the Ethiopian, saying, Take from hence thirty men with thee, and take up Jeremiah the prophet out of the dungeon, before he die. Jer 38:11 So Ebedmelech took the men with him, and went into the house of the king under the treasury, and took thence old cast clouts and old rotten rags, and let them down by cords into the dungeon to Jeremiah. Jer 38:12 And Ebedmelech the Ethiopian said unto Jeremiah, Put now these old cast clouts and rotten rags under thine armholes under the cords. And Jeremiah did so. Jer 38:13 So they drew up Jeremiah with cords, and took him up out of the dungeon: and Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison.*

This kind Ethiopian man, I have heard described as “one of God’s gentlemen” thought about Jeremiah’s physical state and his weakened body. He went just that bit further than demanded and put rags on the ropes so that Jeremiah would not get rope burns when he was pulled from the pit. It is easy to throw money at a problem. Thoughtfulness requires more effort.

What is given to the poor or done for them, God will place it to account as lent to Him, lent upon interest (so the word signifies). He takes it kindly as if it were done to Himself and He would have us take the comfort of it and to be as well pleased as ever any usurer was when he had let out a sum of money into good hands. He will pay him again in temporal, spiritual and eternal blessings. As Matthew Henry observed “Almsgiving is the surest and safest way of thriving”.

In case you have a problem here, think of Jesus watching your giving. *Mar 12:41 And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much.*

Its not what.....its HOW.

Pro 19:18 Correct your children before its too late

Pro 19:18 Correct your children before its too late; if you don't punish them, you are destroying them.

When we look into the face of a baby we have a feeling of the sense of innocence. The baby is a blank sheet of life, unwritten upon and unstained by the dirty ink of time. Many babies grow into fine adults but others grow into the devil’s own helpers. There is a tipping point where destruction enters their lives. All babies are handicapped. They are handicapped by sin and like a disease it will either kill or be cured. That cure is in the hands of wise parents as our verse today says.

One of the most disappointing experiences of my life is seeing children of Christian parents turn their back on the faith. I have seen many examples. A large part of the blame resides with the parents because they didn’t take this verse seriously. People talk about children being neglected and not

having a fair opportunity in society, not having a good education, not having a stable home, not having two parents, not having a loving Christian environment and I have seen children with all of this who have suffered the most appalling neglect. Their souls have been neglected. What was necessary for life was never administered.

There comes a time when these children can no longer shelter under the umbrella of their parent's faith. It is too late as our verse says. *1Co 7:14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.* That does not last forever, they eventually move out with their own faith or no faith.

For me the greatest sadness will be parents in heaven who will look around for their children and they will not be found. Their years of neglect will be reaped in a total loss. That investment of time and energy will be as nothing in the face of what really counts eternally. This verse is saying that children make bad decisions, yet parents foolishly think that they can leave children alone to make good ones. They deny the scripture that says; *Pro 22:15 Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child.*

On the one hand the parents make choices about diet and clothes and on the other let the children make choices about religion and morality. Parents are caring for the body and not the soul. If kids made good choices, God would not have had these verses written. *Pro 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.* Timothy was trained in the scriptures from childhood. *2Ti 3:15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.* Timothy also lived a life in service to others.

I have seen this parental neglect over the years, it has nothing to do with how religious the parents are but it has a lot to do with what they feed the minds of the children with. It also reflects the lack of attention the parents give to scriptures in their own lives. For families who do not study together or pray together, it is no wonder that it is not part of their children's lives.

David was not noted for his parenting skills, rarely calling any of his children into account for their behaviour but he pampered them and indulged their sins, especially Absalom. Our children are gifts from God so we as parents must pass on to our children the sense of responsibility that has been given to us. We have to make ourselves answerable and responsible for their behaviour, disciplining them for their carelessness and reinforcing their thoughtfulness. If Absalom would have been reared with these principles much of David's bitterness and heartache would have been alleviated. He was rebuked for his self pitying cry, "Absalom, O Absalom my son". Joab says, *2Sa 19:6 For thou hast declared this day, that thou regardest neither princes nor servants: for this day I perceive, that if Absalom had lived, and all we had died this day, then it had pleased thee well.*

Our verse said *Pro 19:18 Correct your children before its too late; if you don't punish them, you are destroying them.* Put another way it also says. *Gal 6:7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*

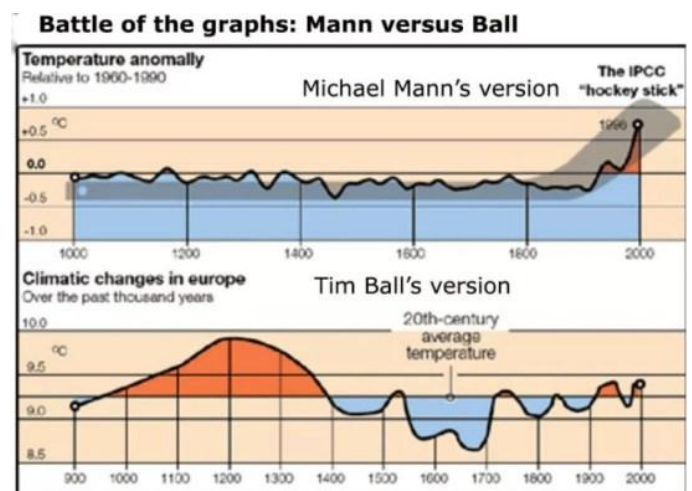
Pro 20:5 Someone's thoughts may be as deep as the ocean

Pro 20:5 Someone's thoughts may be as deep as the ocean, but if you are smart, you will discover them. Pro 20:6 There are many who say, "You can trust me!" But can they be trusted? CEV. Pro 20:6 Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find? AV.

I have just finished reading “The Hockey Stick Illusion: Climategate and the Corruption of Science”, by A.W. Montford. You may recall at the start of the year that we explored the nature of AGW (Anthropogenic Global Warming...Proverbs 15 v 7). There were many questions hanging over the integrity of the “science”, well this book opens them up in detail.

In 2002 every home in Canada received a leaflet promoting the Kyoto protocol and Global warming. It stated that we had just had the warmest year in the last millennium. One of the recipients was Steve McIntyre a semi-retired mining engineer (he was a pure Mathematics graduate from the University of Toronto, PPE post grad. studies at Oxford). In his mining career he was heavily involved in statistics and predictions for analysing prospects for acquisition. He was brought up on stories of Vikings exploring Greenland during the warm medieval period so he questioned whether this statement by “scientists” that there was no medieval warming period was true. Was it really hotter? This was the opening of a huge can of worms.

For some years, the global warming claims had been driven by an iconic image. The hockey stick (the shape of the “warming” curve is flat but curves up rapidly over the past few decades, making it look like a hockey stick). This was the work of a professor Michael Mann who derived its shape from a number of proxies that were designed to give temperature profiles in the past. Proxies are substitutes. For example if you do not have thermometric temperatures, you look for something else that might supply temperatures. In this case they used tree rings. What Steve McIntyre unearthed as he waded through data was that the hockey stick was a statistical aberration based on poor quality data and selective data. 30% did not exist and was “backfill” to make up the numbers. The errors kept emerging despite the attempts to hide data and calculations.



What has opened up the can of worms was McIntyre’s persistence. *Pro 20:5 Someone's thoughts may be as deep as the ocean, but if you are smart, you will discover them.* That is just what happened. However, it has spawned a much wider issue, that of the integrity of Science and even the meaning of science itself. *Pro 20:6 There are many who say, "You can trust me!" But can they be trusted?* The whole peer review system is also now under scrutiny because seldom do peer reviews examine the underlying data from which the conclusions are drawn. Reports are published without anyone seeing the data.

Science refers to a system of acquiring knowledge. This system uses observation and experimentation to describe and explain natural phenomena. The dangers to science and the conflict with policy were noted 50 years ago. "Yet, in holding scientific research and discovery in respect, as we should, we must also be alert to the equal and opposite danger that public policy could itself become the captive of a scientific-technological elite". (Dwight David Eisenhower Farewell Address as U.S. President (1961)).

This is the situation in climate science. Policy has been moulded by a scientific technological elite who sideline those who contradict them, hide information from those that would expose them and vilify those who hold alternative viewpoints. They are now known as the hockey team. Can you trust them? My answer to that is that the evidence that they are putting forward to create policy that will cost billions of tax dollars is based on flawed science. I think that we will see over the coming year even more attacks on the IPCC and perhaps we shall begin to see a sensible approach to climate change, if it is really happening.

McIntyre was often accused of not doing any pure research on climate and he set out a few years ago to remedy this. What builds trust in scientific communities? Openness, honesty and accuracy are at the top of the list but above all, great caution in how much we can build upon the evidence as presented. *Pro 20:6 There are many who say, "You can trust me!" But can they be trusted?*

Pro 20:7 Good people live right, and God blesses the children who follow their example.

Pro 20:7 The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him.

The first blessing from God comes in Genesis. *Genesis 1:22 Then he gave the living creatures his blessing....* we note that blessings are often conditional. If you do something, you will be blessed. *Deu 28:1 And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: Deu 28:2 And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God. Deu 28:3 Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field. Deu 28:4 Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Deu 28:5 Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store. Deu 28:6 Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out.*

Here the condition was diligence that is care and scrupulousness. If the Israelites really did what they were asked with attention to detail, God would bless them. How and what is a blessing?

The blessings of God are measures of His grace to advantage the believer. Blessings are God's rewards for doing the right thing and in some measure, an outward confirmation that you are doing the right thing. They are set in sharp contrast to the curses for disobedience. *Deu 28:15 But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his*

commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee: A blessing is the opposite of a curse. A blessing was an outward sign of God's favour.

Have you heard of the term sacrament? A sacrament is: "An outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible grace." Chief among them are The Lord's table, baptism and marriage. Sacrament is a word that goes back to St. Augustine. It was a word used in the Roman Military. A recruit for the Roman army became a soldier by undergoing a sacramentum. The sacramentum had two parts: the soldier took an oath of office and the Army branded him behind the ear with the number of his legion.

The sacramentum resulted in new responsibilities and new advantages. The soldier acquired the responsibility for conforming to military discipline and obeying military commands. He also acquired social and legal benefits, because living conditions in the Roman Army were very good and veterans received special privileges and benefits. Ancient Latin theologians seized upon sacramentum as the best Latin equivalent of the Greek word mystery, when it referred to a church rite because the church rite is simultaneously spiritual and physical and because the person who undergoes the sacrament, simultaneously receives new responsibilities and a new spiritual status before God.

God's blessings are like sacraments. They are feedback on our walk with God. They light up our lives with joy. The book of Psalms starts with a blessing. *Psa 1:1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.* The blessings of Christ should be upon us all. *Eze 34:26 And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing.* Jesus describes a host of blessings. *Mat 5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Mat 5:4 Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Mat 5:5 Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Mat 5:6 Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Mat 5:7 Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Mat 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Mat 5:9 Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. Mat 5:10 Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Mat 5:11 Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.*

The idea of blessings has spawned many hymns. The London Daily at the turn of the last century reported an account of a meeting presided over by Evangelist Gypsy Smith. Mr. Smith announced the hymn 'Count Your Blessings.' Said he, 'In South London the men sing it, the boys whistle it and the women rock their babies to sleep on this hymn.' "During the great revival in Wales it was one of the hymns sung at every service along with such Welsh favourites as "Guide me, O Thou Great Jehovah" and "O That Will be Glory."

When upon life's billows you are tempest tossed,
When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,
Count your many blessings, name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done. (Johnson Oatman)

I will not go into them now but the Bible has literally hundreds of blessings to be discovered. Here today is one of them. It is a blessing for children. If Children follow the good example of their parents they will be blessed. It is also an exhortation to parents to set a good example from which their children can be blessed.

And don't forget the thank you Lord!!

Pro 20:8 When rulers decide cases, they weigh the evidence

Pro 20:8 When rulers decide cases, they weigh the evidence. Can any of us really say, "My thoughts are pure, and my sins are gone"? Two things the LORD hates are dishonest scales and dishonest measures.

God loves truth. God loves evidence. *Deu 19:15 Before you are convicted of a crime, at least two witnesses must be able to testify that you did it.* CEV. In other words there had to be good evidence that the person committed a crime. Circumstantial evidence may not be enough. In order to safeguard people from overzealous prosecutors, false witnesses suffered the punishment that would have been given to the man falsely accused. *Deu 19:16 If a false witness rise up against any man to testify against him that which is wrong; Deu 19:17 Then both the men, between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges, which shall be in those days; Deu 19:18 And the judges shall make diligent inquisition: and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother; Deu 19:19 Then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother: so shalt thou put the evil away from among you.*

Truth was also expected in weights and measures. *Deu 25:13 Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small. Thou shalt not have in thine house divers measures, a great and a small. Lev 19:36 Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin, shall ye have: I am the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt.*

So sacred were the weights and measures that there was a standard kept in the sanctuary where God dwelt. *Exo 30:13 This they shall give, every one that passeth among them that are numbered, half a shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary.* Here are 3 examples of dishonesty that appeared in the press this very week.

1. A report by scientific and engineering experts warned of significantly greater risks of vast destruction from Brisbane River flooding and raised grave concerns with the Queensland government and the city's council a decade ago. But the recommendations in the report for radical changes in planning strategy, emergency plans and transparency about the true flood levels for Brisbane were rejected and the report was covered up. The local and state government at the time were less concerned with flood risks and more interested in seeing property development in low-lying areas.

2. The Freedom of Information Act gives you the right to ask any public body for all the information they have on any subject you choose. Unless there's a good reason the organisation must provide the information within 20 working days. You can also ask for all the personal

information they hold on you. Everyone can make a request for information, there are no restrictions on your age, nationality, or where you live.

The BBC served Freedom of Information request (FOIA) on UK Government over weather forecast secrecy in the worst winter for 100 years. Last week the weather service caused a sensation by making the startling claim that it was gagged by government ministers from issuing a cold winter forecast. Instead, a milder than average prediction was made, that has been resoundingly ridiculed in one of the worst winters in a century. With the BBC appearing to take the side of the Met Office by seeking to force the government to give honest answers, untold harm will likely befall Prime Minister Cameron's global warming policies on energy, taxation and the environment.

3. Disgraced Eric Illsley said today that he was quitting as an MP after being convicted of dishonestly claiming more than £14,000 in expenses. The Member for Barnsley Central said he 'deeply, deeply' regretted his actions and would be resigning before his sentencing next month. Illsley had previously denied dishonestly claiming a total of more than £25,000. But yesterday his barrister, William Coker QC said his client admitted wrongly claiming a revised sum of about £14,500. The claims were made for council tax, telephone usage, service charges and maintenance, and insurance and repairs at his second home in Kennington, South London between 2005 and 2008.

The Freedom of Information Act is a great blessing as it is a tool that can reveal dishonesty and corruption. Currently Virginia taxpayers, a state lawmaker and a public interest law firm are asking the University of Virginia to produce important "global warming" records under that state's Freedom of Information Act. We can then finally determine what it is that so many have gone to such great lengths to keep the public from knowing about that, for which the public has paid. We shall see much more use of the FOIA in the months and years to come.

Pro 20:12 The hearing ear, and the seeing eye

Pro 20:12 The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the LORD hath made even both of them.

This to the Christian, is a statement of the obvious but it is profound and with profound implications. Of course, the Christian believes that God created the codes for life, the genetic code that defines the machines of which we are composed. *Psa 139:16 but with your own eyes you saw my body being formed.* CEV

Of course the eye of itself is totally useless, just as the ear is of itself. These wonders are what we call transducers. A transducer is a device that converts one type of energy to another. A microphone for example turns pressure (sound waves) into electrical energy, a speaker turns electrical energy into sound energy. Microphones and speakers are transducers. The eye is capable of changing light energy (photons) via chemistry into electrical energy.

Both the ear and the eye have amplifiers built into them. An amplifier is a device for increasing the power of a signal making it larger. The eye has a lens that can amplify the light signal 100,000 times, the ear lever system amplifies sound by 800 times. So the eye and the ear transducer amplify the

signals that they receive. But they do not see and they do not hear. They merely pick up the light and the sound. The brain sees and hears.

Our text is deeper. It talks of the “hearing” ear and the “seeing” eye. These two systems (eye and ear) are each composed of three parts. The sensors, the transmitters and the processor. The eye and the ear, the optic and auditory nerve and the brain. The seeing eye and the hearing ear are in effect the whole system.

Eventually the signals, light and sound are processed into what we sense as images and noise. These exist in our brain as analogues of the world outside our brain. These, among other senses enable us to move in, interrogate and explore the world around us. They are much more than this however because they enable us to communicate with God or not as the case may be.

We are not just artistic objects, statues or paintings. We are creatures that interact with our maker. The whole process that leads to this level of communication requires 19 universal constants. This is the first platform that will define the structure of the Universe from which we have been constructed through a molecular code. Upon this next platform, this code governs our physical development and growth, defining what we shall become. Upon this platform stands the eternal soul.

The direction of our eternal soul towards heaven or hell will depend in a measure upon what and how we heard and upon what and how we saw. It will also depend to a degree upon how we reacted to what we saw and heard (although this is an indicator of the former). *Isa 33:15 He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; Isa 33:16 He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.*

In all our hearing and seeing we are responsible to the Creator of the ear and the eye. Do you remember that Sunday school song that we used to sing? I am more convinced now that it should be for adults also.

Oh, be careful little eyes, what you see.
Oh, be careful little eyes, what you see.
There's a Father up above, looking down in tender love,
So be careful little eyes, what you see.

We often talk about seeing with God's eyes but how about Him looking through yours? *Psa 94:9 He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see?* I believe that God also sees and hears through us. We are recorders for the day of judgement. Our eyes and ears are also the eyes and ears of God. *Pro 15:3 The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.* It is as if we are recording our own book of life for the day of judgement

God is thus the All-hearing and the All-seeing, from which on the one side the consolation arises that everything that is seen stands under His protection and government. The great work of God is still far

from complete. As we develop and express our eternal souls nurtured by what is fed into our minds, we are preparing for the next step on our journey.

1Co 15:36 Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: 1Co 15:37 And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: 1Co 15:38 But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.

Having been created out of the substance of this Universe we shall transcend it into the age to come. All that has been built here will go through another process that brings us to glory. Just as we were formed in the human womb, we were born again into God's kingdom and we shall be born yet again into heaven with a new body. *Isa 64:4 For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.*

Our verse today is deeper than it seems. It is multi-faceted, like a gem stone. It sparkles. *Pro 20:12 The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the LORD hath made even both of them.* The greatest use that can be made of those organs is to employ them in the search and service of God. *Deu 5:24 And ye said, Behold, the LORD our God hath shewed us his glory and his greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire: we have seen this day that God doth talk with man, and he liveth.*

Pro 20:14 It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer

Pro 20:14 It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer: but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth.....Pro 20:14 Everyone likes to brag about getting a bargain.CEV.

While everyone loves a bargain, we also do not like getting fleeced. It was to a religious group, the Quakers that we owe fixed pricing of goods. Few are aware of the extent of Quaker involvement in business in the 18th and 19th centuries. You may know that the four main chocolate companies Cadbury, Fry, Rowntree and Terry - were all Quaker businesses in their origin. It went far beyond chocolate. The iron and steel industry of the country owes its origin to the Darbys of Coalbrookdale, and to Huntsman of Sheffield (steel). Our railway system began with the Pease's of Darlington, who ran the first train from Stockton to Darlington in 1825 on what became known as the Quaker Line. To know what train to catch you consulted Bradshaw's guide, he was another Quaker.

Banking was dominated by the Quakers. Lloyds were bankers and ironmasters and all the founding families of Barclays were Quakers. In addition, the majority of the country's banks were Quaker owned and run. They were also involved in the brewing industry. The Quaker influence extends to shoes - Clark's of Street, K of Kendal and Morlands of Glastonbury, to matches - Bryant & May, to food - Huntley & Palmers, Carr's Biscuits, Reckitt's and Horniman's Tea. Their unwillingness to support war opened up business opportunities. The Darbys did not as ironmasters make cannon during the Napoleonic wars like their competitors. Instead, they developed a whole range of domestic ironware which turned out to be a far bigger and more stable business than armaments.

Fox Brothers the cloth makers (and “puttees”, 852 miles of it, for the soldiers) in Taunton was also one of the first employers to have a pension scheme.

While in 1800 Quakers were only 1 in 500 of the population, they played an important part in the transformation of Britain into an industrial nation. Why were they in business? One reason was that they were debarred from any official positions, from most of the professions and from going to university because of their religious beliefs. With the restoration of the monarchy, a number of laws were passed in the 1660s to prevent those outside the Church of England from having positions of influence. They suffered persecution and particular problems were their refusal to swear oaths and to pay tithes to the Church. Their refusal to swear meant they would not take the Oath of Allegiance to the Crown, which could be interpreted as disloyalty, if not treason.

Industry and commerce were therefore outlets for people with drive and energy and who, in religious terms, thought for themselves. They were also educated, largely through their own efforts, since they all learnt to read and write in order to spread the word. Looking at the particular beliefs of Quakers helps to explain why, having entered business they took the lead in so many fields. It is however impossible to separate the kind of people who became Quakers from the beliefs which brought them to join the Society of Friends. It is the combination of the two, which accounts for their remarkable record of business leadership.

The Society was founded by George Fox in 1650. His revelation was that the divine presence was within him. This inspired him to preach that there was, in his words "That of God in every man", which led him and his followers to look for personal guidance from that Inward Light. This self-reliance meant that there was no need for appointed ministers or for creeds or sacraments. They preached equality, all were equally children of God and members of a universal brotherhood. The established order felt threatened by this revolutionary approach which did away with hierarchies and which did not recognise worldly honours, distinctions or claims of office, since honour lay with God alone. They were therefore persecuted by those in authority well into the 18th century.

The encouragement to look for a better way forward, rather than accept the world as it is, stemmed from the belief that they should follow the Divine Light within themselves. It made Quakers ready to challenge accepted practices and to innovate. The spirit of innovation was unintentionally assisted by one of the laws passed to keep Quakers and other dissenters in their place. The Five Mile Act of 1665 meant that Quakers needed to live more than five miles from established towns and cities if they were to worship and to go about their trades freely.

The 5 Mile Act or Non-conformists Act forbade clergymen from living within five miles (8 km) of a parish from which they had been expelled, unless they swore an oath never to resist the king or attempt to alter the government of Church or State. The latter involved swearing to obey the 1662 prayer book.

Birmingham was as a result a centre for Quakers and nonconformists. There they had the advantage that they were not bound by the restrictions imposed by the guilds over matters like apprenticeships and methods of working. They were free to invent new products and new methods of production. A good example is Robert Ransome whose firm makes lawnmowers to this day. In 1803, he invented

the self-sharpening plough, which kept its edge as it wore. Then in 1808 to meet the problem that farmers tended to break their ploughs all at the same time at the beginning of the season, he produced ploughs made of interchangeable parts. They could be quickly repaired by inserting new parts instead of his having to repair the whole plough on site. In effect he invented the process of mass production used by Ford to make his cars.

The Quakers respected education but were excluded from much of the formal educational system. It was not until 1871 that Quakers and Catholics could enter Oxford or Cambridge. They started their own schools and needed to be literate if they were to carry out their mission. As a Quaker history rather stuffily puts it, their belief in education and study "was an advantageous factor in the quality of mind of an important portion of their labour." Thus they benefited to the extent that they employed fellow-Quakers. Again their approach to learning was not bound by ancient custom. William Penn on leaving for America in 1682 set out his views on how his children should be educated:

"For their learning be liberal.....but let it be useful knowledge, such as is consistent with Truth and godliness.....I recommend the useful parts of mathematics, as building houses or ships, measuring, surveying, dialling, navigation, but agriculture is especially in my eye: let my children be husbandmen and housewives, it is industrious, healthy, honest and of good example, like Abraham and the Holy ancients, who pleased God and obtained a good report."

What was special about the Quakers was that they inspired trust. This was linked to their refusal to swear on oath. Their refusal was based on the Biblical injunction against swearing but fundamentally, on the basis that there could not be two standards of truth. Truth was truth. This led to their success as bankers, because banking depends on trust. It also meant that as shopkeepers they put the price on their goods at which they intended to sell them. This was in contrast to the prevailing custom of haggling over prices. It was an ethical approach but also good business and resented by their competitors. Most people prefer to know they are not being fleeced, rather than to have to bargain to achieve the same end.

They must be unusual among Christian groups in giving specific advice on business ethics. As a result they supported each other and kept an eye on fellow Quaker business people, to maintain their reputation. They saw life as a whole, religion was not just for Sundays. One of the queries Quakers are asked to consider is: "Do you maintain strict integrity in your business transactions and in your relations with individuals and organizations? Are you personally scrupulous and responsible in the use of money entrusted to you, and are you careful not to defraud the public revenue?"

The Quaker example of transparency in business is an example to all Christians. These people got rich because they were honest, not in spite of it. Honesty was not a hindrance, to the contrary it brought business in.

While our verse today suggests: *Pro 20:14 Everyone likes to brag about getting a bargain.* It was a Christian group who worked to put an end to that.

Pro 20:16 Take his garment that is surety for a stranger

Pro 20:16 Take his garment that is surety for a stranger: and take a pledge of him for a strange woman.Pro 20:16 You deserve to lose your coat if you loan it to someone to guarantee payment for the debt of a stranger. CEV

Research by Consumer Focus suggests that 1.2 million people are now taking out a payday loan every year, borrowing a total of £1.2bn. That is despite some companies charging interest rates of more than 2,500% a year. R3 the insolvency trade body, claims that six million people will have borrowed money to pay for Christmas 2010. They estimate it will take one million people more than six months to pay off their debts.

The number of people unable to pay their debts is spiralling at its fastest pace for nearly 15 years. Britons are responsible for a third of all the unsecured debt in Western Europe. In a recent survey nearly two-thirds of lenders say there is an increase in the amount of debt that their customers cannot pay back. "There is very much a "buy now, worry about it later" culture among a lot of people. "It has been very easy for them to borrow. A significant number of people just don't think about what the consequences are".

The Bible has a lot to say about finance and a warning. *Pro 22:7 The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender. Rom 13:8 Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.* We are to avoid obligations and debts. The idea of putting students in debt through loans is not Biblical. It has become an industry in its own right and a well paid one. The Chief Executive of the student loans company, on a salary of about £390,000 resigned in May 2010.

Debt is viewed as a form of slavery in the Bible and we are to avoid it. Debt is as much about attitude as it is about finance and as our text shows, the lenders have a responsibility also. Debt is about living off of a future you have no right to presume upon. *Jas 4:15 For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.* If you die and do not repay, that failure to pay what has been taken from that future is theft.

The Biblical Society was funded by 3 things 1. The tithe, 2. Secured loans and 3. Charity. The tithe or 1/10th was paid annually on the increase or annual profit. *Deu 14:22 Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year.* In other words your capital, the money you had accrued over the years was tax free, you only paid tax on your profits. It was also a single rate across the board. We should also remember the moral linkage between prosperity and wealth. *Deu 28:2 And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God.*

There was nothing obscene about wealth in the Bible or being rich, what mattered in God's eyes was the attitude of heart to riches. Riches can be a snare and Jesus has much to say on this but perhaps the best remembered is the encounter with the rich young man who was snared by his wealth. *Luk 18:23 And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich. And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!*

Somewhere in between is good. *Pro 30:8 Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me:* As we saw with the Quaker community they had wealth which they used for the benefit of humanity and not for themselves. The Quakers showed that they were way ahead of their time in social reform and that societies can function without complex central government.

Usury or interest charges on investments and loans are Biblical. Lenders share risks as well as the borrowers and should have some return for that risk. This was at the root of the story of the Talents. *Mat 25:27 Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.* God expects returns on His investments.

If a brother fell on hard times he could borrow but that had very precise terms. *Deu 23:19 Thou shalt not lend upon usury to thy brother; usury of money, usury of victuals, usury of any thing that is lent upon usury: Deu 23:20 Unto a stranger thou mayest lend upon usury; but unto thy brother thou shalt not lend upon usury: that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all that thou settest thine hand to in the land whither thou goest to possess it.* Loans to believers were interest free loans, to non-believers they were not. There was solidarity among the believers.

נִשְׁךְ nâshak is a primitive Hebrew root; to strike with a sting (as a serpent); figuratively, to oppress with interest on a loan, to bite. You were not allowed to excessively bite your brother. You could not take a pledge that was used to provide his livelihood. *Deu 24:6 No man shall take the nether or the upper millstone to pledge: for he taketh a man's life to pledge.* A pledge is a security and acts also to remind the borrower of his obligations. Here was the origin of Pawn shops. A pawn is a peon or a powerless person. It is often a word used to describe someone or something that is used or manipulated.

Loans had a limited duration in Israel. *Deu 15:1 At the end of every seven years thou shalt make a release. Deu 15:2 And this is the manner of the release: Every creditor that lendeth ought unto his neighbour shall release it; he shall not exact it of his neighbour, or of his brother; because it is called the LORD'S release.*

I think that this approach to helping the poor was like the divorce law, a provision of the law that accommodated hardness of heart. *Mat 5:42 Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.* A good brother would give to the poor not loan to the poor, so a secured loan was in a sense a mark of the covetousness of the lender. *Pro 19:17 He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.*

The question of the needs of the individual that asks for a loan now draws our attention. *1 Ti 6:6 But godliness with contentment is great gain. 1 Ti 6:7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. 1 Ti 6:8 And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.* A lot of borrowing is not out of necessity but out of discontent and self-indulgence. It is not life threatening needs. Christians are encouraged to lead modest lives as befits those passing through to a higher kingdom. Unfortunately, many Christians are ill content.

The Christian should live by a rule that if he cannot save up for something, then he should not go into debt to finance it. If he cannot be prudent and save, how will he pay off a loan? Besides it is always cheaper to buy goods cash than through a loan where you pay interest. Returning to the subject of paying for education, I despise those parents who encourage their children to take loans rather than support them directly. It is a Christian principle and duty that parents support their children. *2Co 12:14 Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.* They had 17 years to prepare for University. This harks back to a thought about inheritance. That is a parental responsibility and duty.

Financial institutions that lend money without security are encouraging irresponsible borrowing. Home buyer tax credits fuelled the house buying boom in the US. One of the main causes of the housing crash, lies in the fact that banks and financial institutions were lending mortgages at 5 to 10 times the annual incomes of people, which was way above the safe value of 3 to 4 times. These financial powerhouses used aggressive terms and conditions but did very little scrutiny while providing mortgages. This led to an easy cash flow in the market, which fuelled the housing prices as well. The US economic meltdown also played a major role in the housing market crash world over. Foreign investors who had invested in the real estate (property) market in US had to declare bankruptcy owing to massive loss. The housing crash is expected to cost the banking system a whopping \$2 trillion dollars.

Our text suggests that it is not only the borrowers who should suffer, although they will, but also the persons who stand surety for them. *Pro 20:16 Take his garment that is surety for a stranger: and take a pledge of him for a strange woman.* The money lenders of this age take little concern about the character of the borrowers. The UK government has debts of £1 trillion or £40,000 per person. To pay this year's £43 billion interest bill, every household will stump up more than £1,800 in tax. That is £117 million pounds a day in interest.

There will be a moral reckoning before God for this profligacy and the nation's leaders are a reflection of its people.

Pro 20:18 Be sure you have sound advice before making plans or starting a war.

The jury is still out on the legality of the Iraq war but it is clear that there was not much sound advice. <http://costofwar.com/en/> The cost to the US is estimated at \$800bn - \$3tn for Iraq, making the British \$14bn look paltry. Afghanistan has so far cost \$400bn. In Iraq the recorded civilian death toll is 600,000 lives (Lancet). The cost of the Iraq war could have eliminated world hunger for 5 to 10 years. These outlays would not have been unknown to the coalition at the start of the conflict.

The UK finished paying for WW2 in 2006! Was it worth it? Would a Christian have initiated an aggressive war or should we be pacifist? The Quaker Declaration of Pacifism states: "We utterly deny all outward wars and strife, and fighting's with outward weapons, for any end, or under any pretence

whatever; this is our testimony to the whole world. The Spirit of Christ by which we are guided is not changeable, so as once to command us from a thing as evil, and again to move unto it; and we certainly know, and testify to the world, that the Spirit of Christ, which leads us into all truth, will never move us to fight and war against any man with outward weapons, neither for the kingdom of Christ, nor for the kingdoms of this world." (to Charles II, 1660). This teaching was not universally observed and there was a Quaker regiment in the American Civil war.

Sound advice is certainly needed as this is a very complex issue, especially at a personal level. Early Christians would not fight for Rome, not because they rejected being a combatant but because it involved an oath to the emperor as god. Should we refuse to fight while at the same time accepting the protection of the state? Is there a difference between taking up arms for a nation or supporting a war by making munitions? Is it contributing to the war effort?

The Bible makes comments on issues related to war but no direct statement on pacifism. *Mat 26:52 Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Violence breeds violence. Jas 4:1 From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?* Wars are a consequence of personal desires. They start in the heart and end on the battlefield. Although the context is the cost of discipleship, this illustration reflects our text for today. *Luk 14:31 Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?* Is it worth it?

Before Pontius Pilate, Jesus refused to invoke His armies to save Him. *Joh 18:36 Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.* This verse does not mean Christ was pacifist. This is a comment on Christ's kingdom. It is otherworldly. If Jesus had a worldly kingdom then His armies would have fought Rome. They certainly shall fight at the end of time.

The Christian is always at war in one sphere. *Eph 6:11 Put on the whole armour* (panoply from pan hoplos = all weapons. See Hoplites) of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. *Eph 6:12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.* No Christian can be a pacifist when it comes to this war. There can be no conscientious objectors without being anti-Christian.

The question of taking life whether it is through judicial process or through war is a debate that will continue. War is the product of an imperfect world. The Bible does though direct us to a future where war has no place. That can only be in a world where sin has no place. *Mic 4:3 And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. Isa 11:6 The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.*

Pro 20:21 An inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning

Pro 20:21 An inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning; but the end thereof shall not be blessed.

We might consider this verse to reflect the idea of ill gotten gains that are “easy come, easy go”. John Gill comments, “Some Jewish interpreters, as Gersom, understand it of an inheritance which comes to persons from their friends, without any labour or industry of theirs; and which they are not careful to keep, but, as it lightly comes, it lightly goes:” Matthew Henry comments, “there are those that will be rich, by right or wrong, who make no conscience of what they say or do if they can but get money by it, who, when it is in their power, will cheat their own father”.

The Proverb reminds me of the story of the “Prodigal son”. (Latin prodigere to drive away, squander). *Luk 15:12 And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.* Normally, an inheritance is given after death but in this case the youngest son wanted it in advance. In a sense, he wanted his father dead. *Luk 15:12 And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. Luk 15:13 And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. Luk 15:14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. Luk 15:15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. Luk 15:16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. Luk 15:17 And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! Luk 15:18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, Luk 15:19 And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. Luk 15:20 And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. Luk 15:21 And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.*

The younger son gained a hasty inheritance at the beginning and we see the downward spiral of his life from that day forward. We see that he first spent the inheritance on riotous living. The word “riotous” literally means “unsaved” or wasteful living. From there he descended lower still and became a pig herder. The inheritance gotten hastily at the beginning was not blessed.

(2005) Arthur and John Watts had a privileged upbringing as children of a wealthy businessman. They lived in a country mansion and went to a public school. When their father Geoffrey Watts died the brothers and their two sisters divided a bequest of £6m. A decade on the bulk of the brothers' share of the inheritance is believed to have been lost through bad investments, while Arthur is in prison in Barbados accused of masterminding an extraordinary, violent plot to kidnap his brother. The brothers' story is all the more remarkable because their father appears to have been the model of the respectable businessman, on the board of 60 firms and chairman of 16.

William "Bud" Post won \$16.2 million in the Pennsylvania lottery in 1988 but now lives on his Social Security. "I wish it never happened. It was totally a nightmare," says Post. One South Eastern family won \$4.2 million in the early '90s. They bought a huge house and succumbed to repeated family requests for help in paying off debts. The house, cars and relatives ate the whole pot. Eleven years later the couple are divorcing, the house is sold and they have to split what is left of the lottery proceeds. The wife got a very small house. The husband has moved in with the kids. Even the life insurance they bought ended up getting cashed in. "It was not the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow," says their financial advisor.

Susan Bradley, who authored "Sudden Money: Managing a Financial Windfall," says winners get into trouble because they fail to address the emotional connection to the windfall. "There are two sides to money. The interior side is the psychology of money and the family relationship to money. The exterior side is the tax codes, the money allocation, etc. The goal is to integrate the two. People who can't integrate their interior relationship with money appropriately are more likely to crash and burn," says Bradley.

We see the dangers of acquiring wealth quickly from the labours of others. It is more likely that you will survive better if you earn what you get rather than getting it quickly. Perhaps sudden riches should carry a health warning. *1Ti 6:17 Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;* Also where riches are used for self we often see failure. *Luk 12:20 But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? Luk 12:21 So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.*

You might find a legacy can do more harm than good.

Pro 20:24 How can we know what will happen to us when the LORD alone decides?

Pro 20:24 Man's goings are of the LORD; how can a man then understand his own way?

The order of a man's life is a mystery even to himself. He knows not where he is going or for what God is educating him. (Mathew Henry). One has to be in awe of Jesus who went through life knowing God's will. *Mat 26:18 And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples.* How could you sleep in peace knowing each day what that day would bring. Knowing both happiness and sorrow, tragedy and triumph, pain and peace. Each day waking with the knowledge of your approaching humiliating and brutal death. How could you cope with that?

I am sure we can remember happy things but have a tendency to blank out hard times. Take time and think about this. List in your mind those things which you would so much have avoided, the times you would have otherwise. I imagine that it would drive us to despair and suicide if we knew it

all in advance. Blessed uncertainty! Sometimes the anticipation of blessings could also damage us if we knew and anticipated them.

How gracious is our God. He does not say that our days will all be good but he does encourage us not to look into the future. *Mat 6:34 Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.* I think that He helps us by keeping it secret from us. By the way, as we shall see this does not mean we should have no care for the future but we should not be troubled by the present.

Not only is it secret but it is blessed in its finality. *Rom 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.* Go back to those thoughts on things, which you would so much have avoided, the times you would have otherwise. Can you see any good in those things? You probably cannot reconcile Romans 8 verse 28 with that. *Rom 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*

1Co 2:9 But it is just as the Scriptures say, "What God has planned for people who love him is more than eyes have seen or ears have heard. It has never even entered our minds!" CEV. That is how God encourages us through life. We have no idea of what is coming.

I read of Francis Ridley Havergal, that she was in a churchyard and saw a mother grieving by the grave of her child. She walked up and put a hand gently on her and said "think not of the parting but on the reunion". That's exactly it isn't it. We have an awful tendency to dwell on the negative, to look back not forward (Lot's wife), to look down and not to heaven (Bunyan's man with the muckrake), to look now and not beyond now. *Heb 12:2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

I am also glad that God decides my future. I am by this assured that the great Architect of the Universe has taken the same care in planning my future as He did in preparing my coming into His world. I am in the hands of the God who placed the stars in their appointed positions. I am in my time at the place He has appointed me. I am not a Victorian or Edwardian, I am here in the 21st century.

As the hymn says, "I have a destiny I know I shall fulfil, I have a destiny in that city on a hill. I have a destiny and its not an empty wish, for I know I was born for such a time as this".

Pro 20:24 How can we know what will happen to us when the LORD alone decides? This is not a verse that should bring us into darkness. It leads us to far deeper and magnificent thoughts and comforts that the world can never taste unless it drinks the water of Christ. I am not alone in my walk and I never will be.

Pro 20:27 The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD

Pro 20:27 The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly.

The spirit of man, the “breath” of Genesis, the higher life, that which elevates man above the animals also distinguishes him from them. *Gen 2:7 And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.* Such a life, with all its powers of insight, consciousness, reflection, is as a lamp, which God has lighted, throwing its rays into the darkest recesses of the heart. A still higher truth is proclaimed in the Prologue of John’s Gospel. The candle or lamp of Yahweh, derives its light from “the *Light that lighteth every man,*” even the Eternal Word.

Christ took the form of a man not a beast, for man is God’s image. Man has that capability of introspection, he can search his inner parts. He can observe, consider and wonder. *Psa 8:3 When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;* Man is as we say self-conscious and self-aware.

Are we just highly developed mammals? Did we really develop from chimpanzees in a miracle of genetic development? Quote “Despite the similarities in human and chimp genomes, scientists identified some 40 million differences among the three billion DNA molecules or nucleotides, in each genome. The vast majority of those differences are not biologically significant but researchers were able to identify a couple thousand differences that are potentially important to the evolution of the human lineage”.

There are all sorts of questions that arise here in particular. What would drive the genetic changes? After all frogs breed by the hundreds but they are a stable population and they breed every year. Mosquitoes are even more of a problem as they breed up to a 1,000 eggs every 17 days, thus creating huge opportunity for genetic change yet they too are relatively stable populations. Chimps have tiny populations and breeding cycles in comparison, so far less opportunity for genetic change, yet they, so it is claimed, have changed the most!

How are we different from our supposed close relative? Abstract thinking defines us humans. Is the human brain that much different from that of our closest “relatives” the chimpanzees? According to Daniel J. Povinelli, from the University of Louisiana’s New Iberia Research Centre, “Humans constantly invoke unobservable phenomena and variables to explain why certain things are happening. Chimps operate in the world of concrete, tangible things that can be seen. The content of their minds is about the observable world.”

Insight into how chimpanzees really think can be seen in some recent experiments performed by Dr. Povinelli. In these experiments the researchers used the chimp’s natural begging gesture to examine how they really think about their world. They confronted the chimps with two familiar experimenters, one offering a piece of food and the other holding out an undesirable block of wood.

As expected, the chimps had no trouble distinguishing between the block and the food and immediately gestured to the experimenter offering the food. Next, the researchers wanted to see if the chimps would be able to choose between a person who could see them and a person who could not. If the chimpanzees understood how other animals see, they would gesture only to the person who could see them.

The researchers achieved the "seeing/not-seeing" contrast by having the two experimenters adopt different postures. In one test, one experimenter wore a blindfold over her eyes while the other wore a blindfold over her mouth. In the other tests one of the experimenters wore a bucket over her head, placed her hands over her eyes or sat with her back turned to the chimpanzee.

All these postures were modelled after the behaviours that had been observed during the chimpanzees' spontaneous play. The results of the experiments were astonishing. In the tests involving blindfolds, buckets and hands over the eyes, the apes entered the lab and paused but then were just as likely to gesture to the person who could not see them as to the person who could. In several cases, the chimps gestured to the person who could not see them and then, when nothing happened, gestured again as if puzzled by the fact that the experimenter did not respond.

In the case of experimenters facing with their backs to the chimps, they performed as if they knew that those facing away from them could not see and offer them food. However, subsequent experiments proved that the chimps had merely responded to conditioning from the initial experiments, since they had only received food from those experimenters who faced them.

This was proven by having experimenters facing away from the chimps but then turning to look over their shoulders. The chimps were just as likely to gesture to the experimenters facing away as the one who turned to look at them. Chimpanzees have no clue that humans must face them in order to see. It is obvious from these experiments that chimpanzees lack even a simple understanding of how their world works and merely react to conditioning from directly observable events.

Other researchers have noted that chimpanzees do not understand the cause and effect of their actions. Apes will climb onto a box to reach fruit but if the box is absent, will place on the ground beneath the fruit a sheet of paper and stand upon it.

A more recent study examined the ability of human infants and young chimpanzees to help human adults. Ten 18-month-old human infants and young chimpanzees were presented with four categories of problems; out-of-reach objects, access thwarted by a physical obstacle, achieving a wrong (correctable) result and using a wrong (correctable) means. These were group tasks and the creatures could choose to help each other (chimps could help chimps) achieve the result.

While human infants could perform all four tasks, chimpanzees could only perform the first task. As in previous studies, chimpanzees were unable to discern when an individual failed at a simple task and how he could help. The researchers concluded:

"A number of theorists have claimed that human beings cooperate with one another and help one another (especially non-kin) in ways not found in other animal species. This is almost certainly so,

and the current results demonstrate that even very young children have a natural tendency to help other persons solve their problems, even when the other is a stranger and they receive no benefit at all."

Pro 20:27 The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly.

When the Psalmist said. *Psa 139:14 I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.* It was no understatement. The word "wonderfully" in the Hebrew means literally "set apart". We are set apart from the rest of creation.

We are in a sense a transition to deity. *Joh 10:30 I and my Father are one. Joh 10:31 Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. Joh 10:32 Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me? Joh 10:33 The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God. Joh 10:34 Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? Joh 10:35 If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; Joh 10:36 Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?*

The trouble with man is that he doesn't think enough of himself. He would sooner relate to lower species than higher species. He looks down rather than up. He would rather be a monkey than a god. That is why God cast them off. *Rom 1:25 Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. Rom 1:26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature:*

As you think.....so shall you be.

Pro 20:28 Mercy and truth preserve the king

Pro 20:28 Mercy and truth preserve the king: and his throne is upholden by mercy. Pro 20:28 Rulers are protected by God's mercy and loyalty, but they must be merciful for their kingdoms to last. CEV

This is a warning to kings and rulers. Two things that will extend the life of a regime or rule, are Mercy and Truth. Where the king is an unmerciful liar, should Christians support regime change? This week PM David Cameron told Parliament in London that the UN resolution falls short of giving the authority for regime change in Libya, saying "we have to restrict ourselves" even though "almost every leader has actually said the Gaddafi regime has to go." Today that has started.

King Saul was not a good king. David had many opportunities to remove Saul but he would not. *1Sa 24:6 And he said unto his men, The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD'S anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD. 1Sa 26:9 And David said to Abishai, Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the*

LORD'S anointed, and be guiltless? David also killed the man who said he had killed Saul. 2Sa 1:14 And David said unto him, How wast thou not afraid to stretch forth thine hand to destroy the LORD'S anointed And David called one of the young men, and said, Go near, and fall upon him. And he smote him that he died.

Is it the right of people to overthrow tyrants? What about modern tyrants like Churchill who ordered the bombing of Dresden or Blair's lies about weapons of mass destruction? These are crimes against humanity. Why then condemn Mugabe and let Obama off? Obama shows a horrific disregard for unborn life that should disqualify him from even serving as a commissioner of drains, let alone president. There was an act of breathtaking injustice, which the Obama campaign lied about, until critics produced documentary proof of what he had done. As an Illinois state senator Obama opposed legislation to protect children who are born alive, either as a result of an abortionist's unsuccessful effort to kill them in the womb or by the deliberate delivery of the baby prior to viability. This legislation would not have banned any abortions. Indeed, it included a specific provision ensuring that it did not affect abortion laws. (This is one of the points Obama and his campaign lied about until they were caught.) Obama is an unmerciful liar so why don't we get rid of him? We are very picky and choosy about our tyrants.

What we are seeing more and more of in these days is media based selective reporting. The Japanese reactor issue has placed the Tsunami in the background. Nobody has died from the reactor but 20,000 at least have died by Tsunami (March 2011). We have had our vision changed by media. What is reported (correctly or otherwise) influences our opinions. The media coverage from Libya is enough to make us anti-Gaddafi and introduce no fly zones. Not however for the other regimes in Yemen, Oman, Saudi Arabia or Bahrain who have questionable human rights.

We are in grave danger that our moral compass is being distorted. However if Gaddafi is worthy of overthrow, then so is Obama. What should we do as Christians? We can pray about it. *1Ti 2:1 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.* Let's pray them out. Let's ask God to remove them. It may be that many last so long because we are indifferent to their actions.

Edmund Burke said, "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing." Well that is just like the churches today. We sit on the World's touchline and watch the game rather than influencing the outcome. Yet in Revelation we see the saints calling for justice.

Rev 6:9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: Rev 6:10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

All kingdoms will eventually fall before the kingdom of God but I am sure that many can be hastened to an end by faithful prayers for Divine intervention not by human rebellion.

Pro 21:1 The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD

Pro 21:1 The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will. AV Pro 21:1 The LORD controls rulers, just as he determines the course of rivers. CEV

Controversies in the early church created the opportunity to develop systematic theology. Pelagius (ca. 360 - 420 AD.) was a Welshman or at least a Celt from the British Isles. His name Pelagius is a Graeco-Roman form of his surname Morgan, meaning "Son of the Sea". He taught that people had the ability to fulfil the commands of God by exercising the freedom of human will apart from the grace of God. In other words, a person's free will is totally capable of choosing God and/or to do good or bad without the aid of Divine intervention. Pelagianism teaches that man's nature is basically good. Thus it denies original sin, the doctrine that we have inherited a sinful nature from Adam. He said that Adam only hurt himself when he fell and all of his descendents were not affected by Adam's sin.

These teachings have surfaced again and again with the likes of Jacob Arminius in the late 1500's and became a major influence on the theology of the Wesley's and Methodism. There were a few Calvinistic Methodist chapels however and George Whitfield was one of their famous preachers. They fought against Arminianism.

Pelagius could not see the point in "believing" if God exercised overall control of man's will. The hardening of Pharaoh is often cited as an example of free will. *Exo 8:15 But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said.* Yet we see long before this that God had determined to harden his heart. *Exo 4:21 And the LORD said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go. Exo 7:3 And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt. Exo 14:4 And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that he shall follow after them; and I will be honoured upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host; that the Egyptians may know that I am the LORD. And they did so. Exo 14:17 And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them: and I will get me honour upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen.*

"The LORD controls rulers, just as he determines the course of rivers", says our text. How could He be Lord if He did not? *Rom 9:17 For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.*

The mechanistic view of the Universe (propagated by Laplace) sees the Universe as an arrangement in which stars and planets interact with each other like springs and cogs in a clock, while God is watching from above. Deism is a belief in the existence of a God who is not personally involved in the workings of the Universe or in the lives of people. The Bible teaches that these views are incorrect.

One can see quite clearly from the life of Job (Chapter 1) that God intervenes in his daily life...so does the devil but only by permission. God is and I say it with respect, a hands on God. *Act 17:28 For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Heb 1:3 Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;*

The Pelagian view of life is one that breeds uncertainty, relies upon fallible man and gives no certainty of salvation. It is not the teaching of scripture and that I think is the real crux of the matter. When men were striving to understand the deeper teachings of the gospel many reverted to ancient philosophy rather than developing their reasoning through scripture. The claim of scripture is that it is divinely inspired. *2Ti 3:16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:*

That is the only book that God accepts as authority (see Jesus' teaching). It is through that book we have hope. *Rom 15:4 For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.*

I believe in a God who is in control because only that God could deliver on His promises. The future can only be certain and prophecy can only come to pass, if God is controlling the people and the events in our world....." just as he determines the course of rivers."

Pro 21:2 Every way of a man is right in his own eyes

Pro 21:2 Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the LORD pondereth the hearts. AV Pro 21:2 We may think we are doing the right thing, but the LORD always knows what is in our hearts. CEV

It is suggested that this section in Proverbs is written to instruct the king of Israel. The king is put in his rightful place among men and under God. Kings are liable to become tyrants if their power is not tempered. Their appeal to divine right may encourage them in this.

The divine right of kings is a political and religious doctrine of royal and political legitimacy. It asserts that a monarch is subject to no earthly authority, deriving his right to rule directly from the will of God. The king is thus not subject to the will of his people, the aristocracy or any other estate of the realm, including (in the view of some, especially in Protestant countries) the Church. According to this doctrine since only God can judge an unjust king, the king can do no wrong. Yet they can and they do. They should set us the example of God on earth.

While kings may enjoy higher standards of living than many of the people they are judged in the same way. *Rev 20:12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened:* The great are given no special place on judgement day, no separate room or comforts, no privacy concerning their lives.

Watching the recent royal wedding (April 2011) with everyone in their fine clothes I was led to wonder if they will stand before God exposed in their nakedness. It will be a great leveller of men.

The saints will of course be clothed. Rev 7:9 *After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;*

Our God looks into the hearts of men as our text says. Luk 5:22 *But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answering said unto them, What reason ye in your hearts?* We may be able to hide our inner most thoughts from men but we cannot do so before God. It goes even deeper though. God sees through our self deceit. He sees our pretentiousness, our self righteousness, our lies and our vanity.

Is all hopeless? No, because we are shown these things to consider our ways. It should breed in us a deep humility. Sin has eaten so far into our souls that we cannot even know ourselves. Jer 17:9 *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*

I do not think that God reveals the depths of sin to us when we are saved by His grace because the pain and sorrow would be unbearable. We would be suicidal. I think that Judas Iscariot's suicide was precipitated by his comprehension of what he really was. For all the years spent with Jesus, his heart had deceived him. He took the money in the act of betrayal and then saw his guilt and despair followed swiftly. Mat 27:3 *Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood.*

God in His mercy reveals sin to us progressively as we are sanctified. He peels back the layers of our lives as He deals with the depths of our heart. We begin to see more of what we are before Him as He changes us.

This seemed to me a strange choice of scripture at the royal wedding.... Rom 12:2 *And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.* It was the voice of God addressing the nations (2 billion viewers) from His word. He was saying to men that "you may think you are in your right mind, but I know differently".

The message is, do not be right in your own eyes but be right before Me, in my eyes. May God grant us that we may know what this is?

Pro 21:3 To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.

Pro 21:3 To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.

The Oxford movement started in the 1830's. The immediate impetus for the movement was a perceived secularisation of the church. The movement's leaders attacked liberalism in theology. Their interest in Christian origins led them to reconsider the relationship of the Church of England with the

Roman Catholic Church. The movement postulated the Branch Theory, which states that Anglicanism along with Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism form three "branches" of the one "Catholic Church". Men in the movement argued for the inclusion of traditional aspects of liturgy from medieval religious practice, as they believed the church had become too plain.

We used to call the "high churchmen", 'spikes' and their services consisted in "bells and smells" (referring to the ringing of bells and incense burning). For many people, religion consists in "services" or liturgies and ritual. Our text advises us that sacrifice, a religious activity, is less acceptable than justice and judgement.

Mic 6:7 Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? Mic 6:8 He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? Here are echoes of the Sermon on the Mount.

Jas 1:27 Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world. Pure or clean, religion has nothing to do with church services it is about how we live our lives.

The non-judicial execution of Osama Bin Laden (May 2011) was received with rejoicing in America and around the world this week. President Obama's usual call for "God bless America" has a smell of sewage about it. How can God bless an act that does not conform to justice? *Deu 17:6 At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death.*

Christianity supports the judicial process, especially when dealing with criminals. It is not a mafia that carries out "hits" on those it declares its enemies. Bin Laden was indicted in a Manhattan court in 1998 for conspiracy to attack US defence installations. Normally when an individual is under indictment, the purpose is to capture that person to bring him to court to try him. The object is not to summarily execute him if he's under indictment.

There is no doubt more to emerge from this story and more consequences for the western world. We have been deprived of the opportunity to bring an individual to trial for his crimes. The International Court of justice would have provided far more than a corpse, it would have provided an insight into the twisted mind of a terrorist. It would have laid bare the criminal and debunked the "martyr".

In an echo from history, I draw your attention to Nuremburg. Victors and judges. When Hermann Goering, the most senior of the National Socialist politicians, captured by the Allies at the end of World War Two, was handed a copy of the statement indicting him of war crimes and crimes against humanity he scribbled on the margins: 'The victor will always be the judge and the vanquished the accused'.

He was not the only person to express this thought. The idea that the war crimes trials at the end of World War Two were expressions of a legally dubious 'victors' justice', was not confined only to those

who were its victims. Even on the Allied side there were senior legal experts who doubted the legality of the whole process. The four victorious Allies themselves argued for months over the vexed question of “who” to put on trial and on “what” charges.

The origin of these arguments lay much earlier in the war years, when the western Allies first began to think about the treatment to be meted out to Adolf Hitler and the rest of the German leadership if the Allies won the war. The inclination of the British government and of the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, in particular, was simply to shoot Axis leaders out-of-hand, as outlaws, once they were caught.

The plan was to allow senior officers in the field to confirm the identity of the prisoner and then to execute them by firing squad within six hours. A long list was drawn up of those deemed to be 'war criminals'. No attempt was made to identify their specific crimes. 'The guilt of such individuals,' announced Britain's foreign secretary Anthony Eden in 1942, 'is so black that they fall outside ... any judicial process.' At the end of the war in Europe in May 1945, the firing-squad plan was still the preferred option of British leaders, including Churchill.

Neither the Soviet nor the American government was happy with the British suggestion. Though both nations shared the view that they faced an evil regime, they both favoured some formal process of law, the Soviet Union because it was felt necessary to display publicly the guilt of the accused, the United States because there existed powerful voices in Washington decrying the idea that democratic states should simply murder their enemies.

When the one-time judge, Harry Truman, became US president on the death of Franklin D. Roosevelt in April 1945, he insisted that enemy leaders should be given a formal trial based on western practice, with clear charges and the right to a defence. When the three wartime partners, the British, Americans and Russians met in San Francisco in May 1945 to thrash out the basis for what became the United Nations, the British delegates were outmanoeuvred and a decision was taken to establish a military tribunal to try the cases of those senior politicians and soldiers captured following Germany's defeat.

There then followed six months of wrangling over who should be put on trial and on what charges, and where. There was no precedent. No other civilian government had ever been put on trial by the authorities of other states. No military commanders had been put in the dock alongside their civilian masters before.

The category of war crime, defined under international agreements made earlier in the century, covered specific violations of the rules of war (such as the murder of prisoners of war or the shooting of hostages) but these were enforced against the immediate perpetrators, who were in most cases junior officers and regular soldiers. What the Allied powers had in mind was a tribunal that would make the waging of aggressive war, the violation of sovereignty and the perpetration of what came to be known in 1945 as 'crimes against humanity' internationally recognised offences.

Unfortunately these had not previously been defined as crimes in international law, which left the Allies in the legally dubious position of having to execute retrospective justice, to punish actions that

were not regarded as crimes at the time they were committed. During the summer of 1945 the Allies literally devised a new body of international law to cope with the unique situation they faced. The International Military Tribunal was finally constituted on 8 August, by which time a compromise had been reached on the charges to be applied. The major war criminals were to be tried for crimes against peace, conspiracy to wage aggressive war, war crimes and crimes against humanity, including the deliberate murder of populations on grounds of race.

The western Allies decided not to include the bombing of London, Warsaw and Rotterdam as a war crime. This was a compromise of several kinds. Conspiracy was preferred by American lawyers but it had no basis in French or Soviet or German law. The Soviet side was not much interested in western legal traditions (including the presumption of innocence) but had to accept them to give the trial the semblance of legal propriety.

Most difficult of all, the western states had to accept Soviet insistence that only Axis aggression was covered by the new legal instruments. Otherwise the Soviet government would have been in the dock as well for carving up Poland in September 1939 and attacking Finland three months later.

The western powers also knew that Stalin's regime was guilty of many of the crimes against humanity laid out against the German prisoners (e.g. Katyn massacre), but were forced to keep silent in order to maintain a public face of collaboration. For their part, the western Allies decided not to include the bombing of London, Warsaw and Rotterdam as a war crime, since they had engaged in massively destructive bombing campaigns of their own.

By June 1945 it had been decided not to prosecute surviving Italian Fascist leaders, who were later tried by Italian courts. It was very uncertain which among the large cohort of prisoners ought to be treated as a major war criminal. The Allies' poor understanding of the nature of the Third Reich meant that the preliminary lists drawn up left out key figures (Heinrich Müller, head of the Gestapo - Adolf Eichmann, head of the Gestapo Jewish Affairs office - Otto Thierack, the vengeful SS Minister of the Interior and so on) while focusing on individuals who had played along with Hitler but had clearly had little or no influence on foreign policy or waging war.

One of those eventually arraigned at Nuremberg was Hitler's former economics minister Hjalmar Schacht, who had actually been liberated by Allied forces in a German concentration camp. He was put on trial because he had been a well-known figure in the 1930s, and one who conformed to the Allies' stereotype of the scheming Prussian capitalist.

In the end the Allies chose defendants in ways that can be regarded as nothing other than arbitrary. So poorly informed were the prosecution teams that General Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski, the man who led the atrocious Einsatzgruppen (special action groups) on the Eastern Front, not only avoided an appearance in an Allied court but was actually found to be a helpful witness, incriminating others. He was eventually tried by a West German court. He was later convicted for politically motivated murders committed before the war and died in prison in 1972.

The suicides of Hitler, Heinrich Himmler and Joseph Goebbels and the death of Martin Bormann, meant that the central criminal group evaded justice. The only major party politician to be charged was Hermann Goering.

Others appeared in the dock because they had fallen into Allied hands or because they were made to represent a wider constituency, Schacht stood for the economy, Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel the armed forces, the anti-Semite Julius Streicher for the racist circles in the party. At least one of those indicted, the armaments minister Albert Speer, had explored the possibility of assassinating Hitler in 1945, a fact that may explain why he was eventually sentenced to prison rather than executed.

Once the charges and the criminals had been fixed, the trial opened on 20 November 1945. There were hopes that it would last for no more than a few weeks so that it would maintain public interest and show Allied justice to be swift and inexorable. In practice the trial lasted until October 1946, by which time popular interest had waned.

The long time-span exposed many of the problems inherent in the whole process. The right to defence produced endless arguments about jurisdiction and responsibility in the governing structures of the Third Reich. The legal squabbles, while in themselves an indication that the Tribunal was no kangaroo court, tried public patience. In the end, three of the 22 defendants were acquitted, including Schacht, who had volubly protested his innocence throughout and 12 were sentenced to death by hanging.

Over the next three years a whole series of lesser trials were held of soldiers, officials and industrialists accused of complicity with the actions deemed by the first trial to be criminal. By 1949 when a new German state was reconstituted, the German authorities themselves took over the task of prosecuting those who had so far eluded the courts.

The result of the failure to execute justice and judgement is that we actually become that creature that we fear. Is there now any difference between Osama and Obama? I think not.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwtwo/war_crimes_trials_01.shtml

Pro 21:5 If you plan and work hard, you will have plenty

Pro 21:5 If you plan and work hard, you will have plenty; if you get in a hurry, you will end up poor.

Pro 21:6 Cheating to get rich is a foolish dream and no less than suicide. CEV

These verses are about the necessity of honest planning and hard work. Teenagers are distinctly unrealistic about how much they will earn as an adult a study has found. More than half of teenagers expect to own their own home when they are 25. The survey revealed the average teenager expects to be paid more than £60,000 a year by the time they are 35. On leaving education, they anticipate a salary of about £16,600, rising to £35,400 by the time they are 25 and hitting £61,700 by their mid-30s. But the reality is rather different, with the average 18 to 21-year-old earning just £8,595, rising to only £18,705 for workers in their 20s and £24,333 for those in their 30s. The survey of 12,000 teenagers by Royal Bank of Scotland revealed they are equally unrealistic about climbing on the

property ladder, with 53% expecting to have bought their first home by the time they are 25, while 82% are confident they will have done so by the age of 30.

I think that the lack of realism goes hand in hand with the lack of hard work and lack of planning. It is all wishful thinking. Planning takes time. *Luk 14:28 For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Luk 14:29 Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him.*

Have you ever wondered how much planning went into the creation of the Universe and the Creation of life? *Psa 139:14 I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.* The Architect of the Universe made all things. *Joh 1:3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.* And behind this marvellous complexity lay a master plan. A plan beyond comprehension. A plan that calculated each interaction between the components to create the harmony of life. A plan that would ultimately celebrate the glory of the Son of God.

Some people see cheating as an alternative to hard work and planning. That is a suicidal road to travel says our text. In fact it is illustrated in a recent headline, it emerged that hospitals near Westminster had been put on alert to deal with MPs left distraught by the collapse of their careers, facing possible police investigations and public ridicule. Three unnamed backbenchers are said to have been placed on “suicide watch” by Labour whips, who fear they might break down when the details of their excesses come out.” (Express June 2009) There will be a day of reckoning.

Should Christians have a plan for life? Certainly. God has that plan and it is up to us to find it out. How? We ask him just as Moses did. *Exo 33:13 If this is true, let me know what your plans are, then I can obey and continue to please you. And don't forget that you have chosen this nation to be your own.*” CEV Planning is about developing a synergy with God.

Don't rush your plans but do make plans. If you have no plans your life will go nowhere. Identify your long and short term goals. Write them down. Visualise them. Carefully determine the steps you need to reach them. Set priorities on which step to do first, second, etc. Parents will often worry about the lack of drive, ambition and direction in their children's lives but why complain if you are not encouraging them?

Identify what stands between you and the goal? Write down everything you need to get from where you are to where you want to be. Mentally walk through all the steps. Carefully describe problems that might arise. Determine the barriers. The Bible teaching about making plans says: *Pro 14:23 In all labour there is profit: but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury.* Act on your plans.

The Bible teaching about making plans encourages us to take advantage of new opportunities. Paul spoke to this principle. *1Co 7:21 Art thou called being a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather.* Yet there is one more thing. That plan will only work well with God's help. Make it a daily commitment. *Psa 37:5 Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.*

Pro 21:9 Its better to stay outside on the roof of your house than to live inside with a nagging wife

Pro 21:9 It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house.

The Bible has a lot to say about this aspect of some women's lives. *Pro 19:13 A foolish son brings disgrace to his father. A nagging wife goes on and on like the drip, drip, drip of the rain..... Pro 21:19 It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman.Pro 25:24 Its better to stay outside on the roof of your house than to live inside with a nagging wife..... Pro 27:15 A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike..... Pro 27:15 The steady dripping of rain and the nagging of a wife are one and the same..... Pro 27:16 Its easier to catch the wind or hold olive oil in your hand than to stop a nagging wife. CEV.* Contentious means quarrelsome or striving.

Why is it that women tend to nagging and contention? Why do women go on? Why do they nag? Is it because as daughters of Eve, they do not want to be in subjection? It was Eve that started the fall of man. Is it because they want to run their own way all of the time? Is it because they cannot find peace and contentment and learn to be still?

Samson, who has been called a "rough" Christian was a man who suffered this nagging, eventually to his own demise. At his wedding he had posed a riddle. *Jdg 14:16 Samson's bride went to him and started crying in his arms. "You must really hate me," she sobbed. "If you loved me at all, you would have told me the answer to your riddle." "But I haven't even told my parents the answer!" Samson replied. "Why should I tell you?" Jdg 14:17 For the entire seven days of the party, she had been whining and trying to get the answer from him. But that seventh day she put so much pressure on Samson that he finally gave in and told her the answer. She went straight to the young men and told them.*

There it is! The "you don't love me or you would give me my own way" ploy. She wasn't interested in protecting her husband, only herself. If she had told Samson what was going on, Samson would have dealt the Philistines a blow. As it was the woman herself was killed and burnt. The nagging wife was however, part of God's plan against the enemy. *Jdg 14:4 At that time, the Philistines were in control of Israel, and the LORD wanted to stir up trouble for them.*

Samson then moves on to Delilah who like Samson's wife did not really care for him. She nagged him almost to death. *Jdg 16:15 "Samson," Delilah said, "you claim to love me, but you don't mean it! You've made me look like a fool three times now, and you still haven't told me why you are so strong." Jdg 16:16 Delilah started nagging and pestering him day after day, until he couldn't stand it any longer.*

Giving in to nagging made Samson a weak man and led to his slavery and death. The women in his life who nagged him did not love him and did not care for him. They cared for themselves.

A nagging wife is not in submission to her husband because she tries to dominate him. She tries to wear down his authority, dripping away like a rainy day. *Eph 5:22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.* The Bible says that you are better off away from such a woman living out of the house in the corner of a roof top. That woman who nags cannot claim to be a Christian. Nagging is annoying and unchristian.

How should women behave? *1Pe 3:1 Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.*

The Bible is saying that if you want to put your point across do it with dignity not with guile. Godly conduct will achieve far more. Some women think that if they paint themselves and dress up, that is the way to get a point across.

Well I suppose it does get one point across and that is they are not prepared to follow God's word.

Pro 21:10 Evil people want to do wrong, even to their friends.

Pro 21:10 The soul of the wicked desireth evil: his neighbour findeth no favour in his eyes.

William Tyndale (1494-1536) was a Biblical translator and martyr, born most probably at North Nibley (15 miles south-west of Gloucester), England, in 1494, he died at Vilvoorden (6 miles north-east of Brussels), Belgium, Oct. 6, 1536. Tyndale was descended from an ancient Northumbrian family, went to school at Oxford and afterward to Magdalen Hall and Cambridge.

Tyndale holds the distinction of being the first man to ever print the New Testament in the English language. He was a true scholar and a genius, so fluent in eight languages, that it was said one would think any one of them to be his native tongue. He is frequently referred to as the "Architect of the English Language" (even more so than William Shakespeare) as so many of the phrases Tyndale coined are still in our language today.

What is saddening is the pursuit and betrayal of Tyndale by a wicked man who befriended him. The man was Henry Phillips. In a complicated "sting", Phillips developed a friendship and set up a lunch meeting where Tyndale would be captured. Henry Phillips could not resist one more victory over his already-condemned prize. Almost as an afterthought he asked Tyndale if he would kindly lend him two pounds, on the pretext that he had that very morning lost his purse. Tyndale, who according to Foxe's Book of Martyrs was "simple and inexperienced in the wily subtleties of this world," willingly handed over the money (enough for a poor family to live on for two months) and the two men left the house.

Is this unusual "betrayal by friends"? I do not think so. Evil is bound up in the heart of unregenerate man because men who are not Christian work for the devil. *Eph 2:2 You followed the ways of this*

world and obeyed the devil. He rules the world, and his spirit has power over everyone who doesn't obey God. CEV.

Now I have a question to ask you. Can you give me one example from scripture where the devil has done one good deed, worked to save one life or shown one ounce of compassion? No you cannot. But I can show you many instances of where the devil injures and kills. It is his mission.

Jesus said: Joh 8:44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. The devil will try to destroy the things of Christ. 1Pe 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

There you are. If as Jesus said the devils children will do the works of their father, evil people want to do wrong. That is why you can never have a true friend who is not a believer. That is why an unbelieving partner will destroy a marriage. That is why we are not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers. Well you all know better no doubt but if you ignore these words, you do so at your own risk.

It is not just that we Christians are to ignore the devils children. It is our task to take opportunity against them. *1Jn 3:8 He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. 2Co 10:3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: 2Co 10:4 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) 2Co 10:5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;*

It is my opinion that most Christians couldn't pull the skin off of a rice pudding let alone pull down a strong hold. I have not seen Christians in this generation capable of warfare because they spend no time in making their weapons. The devil has convinced them otherwise. And when the cry comes, "The Philistines are upon you Samson" they will be captured and bound because they have not drawn their strength from God. They have neglected His word, the Sword and they are powerless.

At this point they will feel the full power of the evil people who became their friends. God is not mocked and you will reap what you sow.

Pro 21:11 An ignorant fool learns by seeing others punished

Pro 21:11 An ignorant fool learns by seeing others punished; a sensible person learns by being instructed. CEV Pro 21:11 When the scorner is punished, the simple is made wise: and when the wise is instructed, he receiveth knowledge.

Why is it people cannot accept what God says but would rather learn by making mistakes? The answer is simply that they are fools. They have no wisdom. The ignorant individual sees the scorner

punished and he can learn from. Judgement is an object lesson but how much better to learn by being instructive.

God never encouraged us to let children learn by mistakes. *Pro 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.* It is the ancient equivalent of Health and Safety. Health and safety is about taking the right precautions to reduce the risks of workplace dangers and provide a safe working environment. It is about training people how to avoid making mistakes. Mistakes like putting a tree shredder under the branch that you are sitting on.

The idea that God does not have our best interest at heart is as old as man. *Gen 3:3 But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. Gen 3:4 And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: Gen 3:5 For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.*

Why do people make so many mistakes in life? It is because sin is in the heart of mankind. Sin is the sum and substance of news headlines. Sin rules nations, sin causes wars and famines and brings death in its wake. The four horsemen run their course.

The great weapon of the devil is ignorance. Do you remember that scene in a Christmas Carol where the spirit of Christmas present opens his robe to reveal two children? In response to Scrooge's question as to who they were he replies, "They are Man's. This boy is Ignorance, this girl is Want. Beware them both, but most of all beware this boy!" In part it is ignorance of how to conduct life in a safe manner that causes us sorrow. The world's epidemics are largely founded on ignorance of risk whether it be HIV, Road Safety or Water quality. If there is poverty, it is poverty of instruction. *Pro 29:18 Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.*

Saul was the first king of Israel and had the potential to be a great ruler, however Saul thought that he could do things better than God. He decided one day that he had the right to sacrifice. *1Sa 13:11 And Samuel said, What hast thou done? And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that thou camest not within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash; 1Sa 13:12 Therefore said I, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the LORD: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering. 1Sa 13:13 And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. 1Sa 13:14 But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee.*

Saul is one of those people who cannot accept what God says at face value. He questions it, tries to attribute motive to it and ends up disobeying it. And after the next incident Samuel walks away with these parting words: *1Sa 15:23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.* He learns nothing!

I have met Christians who are old in life years but immature in Christ years. They are ignorant babies. *1Co 3:1 My friends, you are acting like the people of this world. That's why I could not speak to you as spiritual people. You are like babies as far as your faith in Christ is concerned. 1Co 3:2 So I had to treat you like babies and feed you milk. You could not take solid food, and you still cannot,*

Life is an apprenticeship. Masters in various crafts were paid a premium to take on boys who would serve a fixed number of years and were then permitted to trade in their own right as freemen. That is what we are in Christ. All that we do should have as its focus the life to come, the treasure in heaven. Sensible people learn by being instructed. Let me ask you a question, "When was the last time you made a personal effort yourself to be instructed?"

Pro 21:13 Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor

Pro 21:13 Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard. Pro 21:13 If you won't help the poor, don't expect to be heard when you cry out for help.CEV.

This verse is a warning from God. A "Quid pro quo", "tit for tat", "this for that" and "you scratch my back, and I'll scratch yours".

John Wesley said that the last part of a man to be converted is his wallet. Martin Luther said, "Every man needs two conversions: the first his heart, the second of his wallet." We think that giving old clothes or loose change to charities covers our obligation to the poor. What we will not admit is that we are greedy or covetous. *Luk 12:15 Then he said to the crowd, "Don't be greedy! Owning a lot of things won't make your life safe."* CEV. Covetousness is not far from selfishness. People who live for self and contribute nothing to those around them are in the same boat. Why should they be heard when they cry out?

Yet, we are so clever in looking for every possible loophole to rationalise giving the minimum, so how can giving can move from being a threat to a pleasure? *2Co 9:7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.* It must become a part of life. We have to get out of the habit of occasional giving to satisfy our conscience, that is giving of necessity or constraint. That is giving when the collection plate comes around but avoiding any thought of doing something charitable until it does.

Why are we occasional givers like that? It is because we lack compassion. *1Jn 3:17 But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?* Yet it is more serious than that. It questions how the love of God can exist in us. By its very nature the love of God makes a person generous, so a mean person lacks the love of God. It is a proof of life.

For many, giving is dismissed through taking care of the family. *1Ti 5:8 But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.* Yet it goes far beyond that. The boundaries are the boundaries you place on it. *Lev 25:35 And if thy*

brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee; then thou shalt relieve him: yea, though he be a stranger, or a sojourner; that he may live with thee.

Where there is a genuine crying need and we close our ears to the cry, God promises that He will close His ears to us. *Luk 16:24 And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.* As Matthew Henry observed, "He that on earth denied a crumb of bread, in hell was denied a drop of water. God will be deaf to the prayers of those who are deaf to the cries of the poor, which, if they be not heard by us, will be heard against us."

Perhaps we are fearful that God will not supply our needs if we give to others? That is a lack of faith that we should test. George Muller the famous founder of orphanages did just that. First he never shared a need with anyone but God. Second when he had a need, he opened his Bible, searched for a promise that fit that need and then meditated on that scripture.

Mueller believed in the power of thinking through scripture as much as he believed in the power of prayer. Third he pleaded for that promise before God. And he didn't just pray for money, he prayed for individuals as well. Sometimes Mueller prayed for someone for as long as fifty years. He didn't stop praying for anyone or anything until he got his request. That's how convinced he was that God would answer his prayers. Through his prayers Mueller obtained the modern-day equivalent of \$150m for his charities, he led tens if not hundreds of thousands to the Lord and he lived to be 93 years old. That was the power of his faith and life. He estimated that 50,000 prayers had been answered.

Muller is an example of the plus side of our text. He didn't just listen for needs, he looked for them and even when he had nothing, he asked his Father to make up the deficit. He did just that.

Pro 21:16 The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead.

Pro 21:16 The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead.

This verse has much in common with the words of Jesus. *Mat 7:13 Go in through the narrow gate. The gate to destruction is wide, and the road that leads there is easy to follow. A lot of people go through that gate. Mat 7:14 But the gate to life is very narrow. The road that leads there is so hard to follow that only a few people find it. CEV*

In Pilgrim's Progress Christian got up to the wicket gate.

"over the gate there was written, "Knock; and it shall be opened unto you". He knocked therefore, more than once or twice, saying

"May I now enter here? Will he within open to sorry me, though I have been an undeserving rebel? Then shall I not fail to sing his lasting praise on high."

At last there came a grave person to the gate, named Goodwill, who asked who was there? and whence he came? and what he would have? Christian: Here is a poor burdened sinner. I come from the city of Destruction; but am going to Mount Zion, that I may be delivered from the wrath to come. I would, therefore, sir, since I am informed that by this gate is the way thither, know if you are willing to let me in. Goodwill: "I am willing, with all my heart," said he. And with that he opened the gate.

The scripture warns us that the gate and the pathway of life is narrow and not well trodden. It is not the road travelled by the masses. One might also say on account of this that it is not popular.

Broad is the road that leads to death,
And thousands walk together there;
But wisdom shows a narrower path,
With here and there a traveller.

Watts

We may also understand from this that the majority is not always right. Because lots of people follow something doesn't make it right. This is not just about the narrow and exclusive way of salvation, it is about the how we view the world and the Universe. For example, can a man be an evolutionist and a Christian? I do not think so, for to deny the creator is to create a false God. *Exo 20:3 Thou shalt have no other gods before me.* If we wander out of the way of understanding, there remains only death.

We should as Christians develop a healthy scepticism about the world around us. Are we really sure what we are taught is fact or fiction? Halton Arp the astronomer (not a Christian), was in 7th grade at school when he discovered that the solution to a problem in his textbook, as given in the back of the book, was wrong. The revelation was, that received wisdom of the day can be wrong. This started Arp on a path of independent thinking but it has cost him a lot of grief in his life.

Arp discovered, by taking photographs through the big telescopes, that many pairs of quasars (quasi-stellar objects) which have extremely high redshift Z values (and are therefore thought to be receding from us very rapidly - and thus must be located at a great distance from us) are physically associated with galaxies that have low redshift and are known to be relatively close by. Because of Arp's photos, the assumption that high red shift objects have to be very far away - on which the "Big Bang" theory and all of "accepted cosmology" is based - is proven to be wrong! The Big Bang theory is therefore falsified. (Picture of M51 Whirlpool galaxy and quasar).



I am also reminded of Vesalius, the renaissance anatomist who in his search for knowledge, stole the dead body of a criminal hanging on the gallows and brought it back to his room, bone by bone and reassembled it. 1300 years earlier, Galen the Roman physician who dominated medicine, had taught that the breastbone had seven segments yet this skeletal breastbone had only three parts. How could the great teacher Galen have made such a mistake? To Vesalius horror, he realised that Galen had derived his anatomy from an ape skeleton not a human and doctors had for centuries been treating humans based on the description of apes.

The Creator has given us clear guidelines about life, about how to live it, about how to observe it and about how to understand it. On our narrow path we need to find the truth. How shall I know the Truth? *Joh 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.* This truth comes through the Spirit of God indwelling in a man. *14:17 Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.*

It seems to me quite reasonable that if we wish to understand the meaning of life and our duties in life that we go to the One who created it in the first place. If we wish to contemplate answers by avoiding Christ, then we shall remain “in the congregation of the dead”.

Christ frees our minds to sample and enjoy His Universe, man restricts us to his world view in order to enslave us and lead us away from Christ. I should not have to remind you who pulls the strings of the secular state. *Joh 16:11 Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.* Yes, it is the devil who is the father of lies and a murderer from the beginning.

State control begins by telling you lies that if you do not believe, it will kill you (see images below of Stalin).

The way to enslave people is to take control of information, especially misinformation, to steer them away from the truth. It is no surprise that the state wished to take education away from the churches and independent schools. In doing so it could control the minds of the population. It could remove Christianity and substitute religion which has no absolute moral values. It could remove the idea of creation and substitute evolutionary development such that man is not in the image of God but merely a random product. It could make Biblically sinful behaviour (homosexuality etc) normal, abortion into a form of birth control and create an army of counsellors to enforce its regime. The big society of David Cameron or as Orwell would have put it, Big Brother is ever present.

You also need control of the media to propagate the lies.

If we wander out of the way of understanding, there remains only death says our text and that is just what the secular society is encouraging us to do, wander out of the way. It invents its own myths and propagates them as facts. It recruits its own army of teachers, who equally have no concern for the truth. This army of teachers is recognised and regulated by the establishment. You will not get a job as a teacher if you declare your Christian beliefs in their entirety and practice them in the state schools. The same is true of science where you will be relegated to the “weird department”.

In order to get you to wander out of the way, the state must develop its own set of false doctrines and lies. Let me give you an example. "Der ewige Jude", "The Eternal Jew", (1940) is an anti-Semitic German Nazi propaganda film presented as a documentary. "Der ewige Jude" is the German term for the character of the "Wandering Jew" in medieval folklore. The film consists of feature and documentary footage combined with materials filmed shortly after the Nazi occupation of Poland. At this time Poland's Jewish population was about three million, roughly ten percent of the total population.

One of the shots early in the film shows a pack of rats emerging from a sewer, juxtaposed with a crowd of Jews in a bustling street of a Polish city. Close-ups of individuals show sickly, malformed facial features. The narration says that, "as rats are the vermin of the animal kingdom, Jews are the vermin of the human race and similarly spread disease and corruption". "Unlike rats however", the narrator continues, "Jews have the uncanny ability to change their appearance and blend into their "human hosts"". A scene depicts four bearded men in traditional religious Jewish clothing, then shows them shaved and in modern business suits, while the narrator explains that only a "trained eye" can distinguish their Jewish features. Other scenes include footage of notable figures who had earned Adolf Hitler's wrath, such as Albert Einstein (placed adjacent to a series of images about Jewish control of the pornography industry).

It couldn't happen again, could it? Well we have weapons of mass destruction as a pretext for American expansionism. We have David Attenborough plugging evolution on the state television channel. We have the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) established by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) to provide the world with a clear scientific view on the current state of knowledge in climate change and its potential environmental and socio-economic impacts. This group has been shown to lie and exaggerate on the issues such as the Himalayan glaciers melting by 2030.

Czech President Vaclav Klaus, 70, who has twice been elected as Czech President and is its former Prime Minister is one of the most important figures in post-communist Europe. His experiences under totalitarian rule have made him exquisitely alert to the erosion of democratic freedoms. He said (July 2011) environmentalists had been arguing for decades that we should reduce our consumption of fossil fuels, using various farcical ploys from the exhaustion of natural resources to the threat of "imminent mass poverty and starvation for billions".

Those same environmentalists shamelessly talk now about dangerous global warming. "They don't care about resources or poverty or pollution, "They hate us, the humans. They consider us dangerous and sinful creatures who must be controlled by them. I used to live in a similar world called communism. And I know it led to the worst environmental damage the world has ever experienced."

Global warming alarmists "want to change us, they want to change our behaviour, our way of life, our values and preferences. They want to restrict our freedom because they themselves believe they know what is good for us. They are not interested in climate. They misuse the climate in their goal to restrict our freedom. Therefore ...what is in danger is freedom, not the climate". He described the

parallels he sees between the loss of freedom under communism and the new global warming doctrine.

When of course you reject the state garbage and propaganda you become a threat to the state. As Orwell noted “In Times of universal deceit, telling the truth will be a revolutionary act.” This is where the state must re-educate you as it did Winston Smith, the hero of 1984. .

The most effective way of making people accept the validity of the values they are to serve is to persuade them that they are really the same as those, which they have always held but which, were not properly understood or recognized before. And the most efficient technique to this end is to use the old words but change their meaning. Here is an example regarding scripture.

Professor Ellen van Wolde, a respected Old Testament scholar and author (sic!), claims the first sentence of Genesis “in the beginning God created the Heaven and the Earth” is not a true translation of the Hebrew. She claims she has carried out fresh textual analysis that suggests the writers of the great book never intended to suggest that God created the world and in fact the Earth was already there when He created humans and animals.

She said she eventually concluded the Hebrew verb “bara” ברא , which is used in the first sentence of the book of Genesis, does not mean “to create” but to “spatially separate”. The first sentence should now read “in the beginning God separated the Heaven and the Earth.” This garbage is designed to reconcile evolutionary cosmology with the Bible but it fails. The word “bara” is used in *Gen 1:27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.* The idiot translation would be gobbledygook following her exegesis.... So God spatially separated man in his own image, in the image of God spatially separated he him; male and female spatially separated he them!

For Christians, education should be about bringing Jesus to the fore in the world around us. The Westminster catechism has as its first question: What is the chief end of man? Answer. Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.

Michael Faraday (1791-1867) a born again Christian, discovered many of the fundamental laws of physics and chemistry, despite the fact that he had virtually no formal education. The son of an English blacksmith, he was apprenticed at the age of 14 to a bookseller and bookbinder. He read every book on science in the bookshop and attended lectures given at the Royal Institution by various natural philosophers, including Sir Humphry Davy, the discoverer of several chemical elements. In 1812, he applied to Davy for a job, citing his interest in science and showing Davy the extensive lecture notes he had taken. Davy hired Faraday to assist with his research and lecture demonstrations.

In a private lecture given before Prince Albert in 1849 Faraday expounded the wonders of magnetism and the influence that it appeared to exert on every particle in the Universe: “What its great purpose is, seems to be looming in the distance before us....and I cannot doubt that a glorious discovery in natural knowledge and of the wisdom and power of God in the creation, is awaiting our age.” Faraday’s God was not an evolutionary god.

Faraday had a deep sense of the order of God's creation. The laws of nature 'were established from the beginning' and so were 'as old as creation'. The notes of one of his earliest lectures contain the pithy exhortation 'Search for laws'. The task of science was to discover those laws by a process of empirical investigation. As Faraday argued in a memorandum (1844) on the nature of matter: 'God has been pleased to work in his material creation by laws' and 'the Creator governs his material works by definite laws resulting from the forces impressed on matter'. The 'beauty of electricity.... [is] that it is under law'. 'The laws of nature, as we understand them, are the foundations of our knowledge of natural things', he told the audience at one of his lectures.

Faraday was a brilliant iconoclast. Einstein remarked of Faraday that he, of all people 'had made the greatest change in our conception of reality'. Yet despite his achievements Faraday remained a modest and humble person. He declined to be knighted or to receive honorary degrees and only reluctantly accepted a small pension on his retirement in 1858.

What a difference to the world godly men make. Yet godly men spring from godly children and God put the duty of child education on the parents, not the state or its employees. *Deu 6:7 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.* I take these laws and statutes parents are to teach, to be any law and statute that was ordained by God from creation (laws of physics included).

Because the state has been so successful in taking the responsibility for teaching children away from the parents, parents are mostly incapable of instructing their children. The same is true of religion where churches have given over the parental role of instruction to pastors or Sunday school teachers. Services move away from studying the scripture to singing and dancing. Who taught Timothy? *2Ti 3:15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures*, Was it not Eunice and Grandmother Lois who instructed him? Parents would sooner watch a useless TV programme or read a cheap novel than gain instruction that they could pass to the child. That is how far we have fallen and that fall ends in "*the congregation of the dead*" according to our text today.

The text hints at something else. *Pro 21:16 The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead.* Living outside of the truth is to remain in a state of death. They do not become dead because they are already dead. Only through Christ and in Christ is there life and understanding. *Joh 10:9 I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.*



Erased from history. The original version of this photo (left), Yezhov (NKVD) is clearly visible on the right of the photograph. The later version (right) was altered by censors, removing all trace of his presence.

Pro 21:17 He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man

Pro 21:17 He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man: he that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich.
AV

The word pleasure is also translated mirth, gladness, joyfulness, rejoicing and joy. Is it really a sin to love pleasure and more right to acquire wealth? Or is this merely a statement of fact that a person who enjoys life will not be wealthy? His time rejoicing is not applied to wealth creation but he will be a happy soul? I never saw that the Bible teaches that being rich is a virtue. So is this verse suggesting that we should not have pleasure in wine and oil in order that we should become rich?

Yet wealth itself is a snare. *Luk 18:24 How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!* I shudder to think how this generation of Christians will answer to God for their luxurious lives. They spend on themselves and do not make any effort to see how they could bless another. Wealth is a snare to the soul and the King noted this from experience when he said, *Pro 30:8 give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me:*

The long faced miseries that proclaim total abstinence in all things will use this verse as a stick to beat those who take pleasure in the things of life. Small wonder many view the Church as a despondent existence. They are hovering somewhere between the Pound Shop and Oxfam, fashionably locked in the 1960's, whose sole pleasure in life is a single sherry at Christmas. I heard a story of a miserable Christian preaching on a doorstep to "come to Jesus". The house owner looked at the sad face and said, "I have enough problems of my own without getting involved with yours". Christianity was perceived as an additional burden to life.

Every festival of the Lord in the Older Testament was a time of rejoicing. Christianity is about rejoicing and not misery. In fact I would say that those who portray Christianity as miserable are sad Christians. *Php 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.* The annual tithe festival was an occasion of feasting. *Deu 14:26 And thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth*

after, for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine, or for strong drink, or for whatsoever thy soul desireth: and thou shalt eat there before the LORD thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou, and thine household. The word rejoice is related to our word pleasure in the text.

God has created great variety in His creation. When He said, *Gen 1:29 And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat.* I do not think that he meant just stick to the lemons and coconuts? Likewise when He extended the market to clean animals. *Gen 9:3 Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things.* I don't think that He just meant lamb chops and beef mince. He gave variety.

He also gave wine to be enjoyed. *Ecc 9:7 Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works. Ecc 9:8 Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment. Ecc 9:9 Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity,* Those long faced miseries who sacrilegiously consecrate Ribena as the blood of Christ week after communion week, impose their weak conscience on others.

Rather they would have Jesus turn wine into water, than as He did, water into wine. This act alone condemns our home made righteousness that sees evil in "things" rather than in the heart and soul of man. Since we would see evil in the "things" outside of us, we are not in ourselves sinful. How hypocritical is that?

I do not see this verse condemning pleasure and advocating wealth creation. But also, I do not see it advocating a life lived totally for pleasure. There is a balance which is not defined. That is left to the exercise of your conscience. That is totally between you and God. *Act 24:16 And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.*

Pro 21:18 The wicked shall be a ransom for the righteous

Pro 21:18 The wicked shall be a ransom for the righteous, and the transgressor for the upright.

The word for ransom is kopher (כֹּפֶר), literally means to cover. It is used to describe the lid of the Ark of the Covenant, the capporet or mercy seat and also the Day of Atonement or day of covering, Yom Kippur which is the tenth day of the month of Tishrei. Of course, the ultimate covering for man in a sinful world, is Christ. Darby's translation is perfect. *Rom 3:25 (Christ Jesus) whom God has set forth a mercy-seat, through faith in his blood.* The absolute capporet.

Ransom properly signifies the price of at-one-ment (atonement=covering) and generally, the means of reconciliation which covers or atones for the guilt of any one. The faithless steps into the place of the upright and the wrath passes by the upright and falls upon the faithless. There is a sense in which God's anger is appeased upon the faithless as in the days of Noah. *Gen 6:11 The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. Gen 6:12 And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. Gen 6:13 And*

God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Yet God spared Noah.

Other verses carry this theme. *Pro 11:8 The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked cometh in his stead. Isa 43:4 Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life. Isa 53:4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.*

There are times when God's people are caught up in the world of sin and on the verge of becoming collateral damage with the sinners. When Lot moved to Sodom it was beautiful, "as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt." It was on the face of it a good place to live but things were not as they seemed. *Gen 13:13 But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly.* The consequence was that God decided to destroy it but first to deliver Lot and his family from this cess pool of life.

The wicked shall be a ransom for the righteous, does not mean that sin can be forgiven by substituting one sinner for another sinner. It does not mean the God forgives one bad man by killing another bad man. This verse looks from a human point of view at how we are often delivered by God from bad circumstances that we share with sinners. It can also be believers not suffering the consequences of other believers' actions. For example, Achan (Joshua chapter 7) whose disobedience in stealing clothing and gold threatened judgement on the nation.

Jos 7:25 And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the LORD shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones. Jos 7:26 And they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day. So the LORD turned from the fierceness of his anger. Wherefore the name of that place was called, The valley of Achor, unto this day.

Then there is another example in the time of Esther. The jealous ruler Haman wanted to create a holocaust against all Jews. He specifically targeted Mordecai who was Esther's cousin. Well you know the story of how Haman built a huge gallows to execute Mordecai but things didn't quite work out as he became the victim of his own plot. *Est 7:10 So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then was the king's wrath pacified.*

Perhaps *Pro 21:18 The wicked shall be a ransom for the righteous, and the transgressor for the upright,* is a prayer like the Lord's Prayer, "Deliver us from evil". Lord, cover us from your anger as we live in this wicked age and let us not be numbered with the transgressors.

Pro 21:22 A wise man scaleth the city of the mighty

Pro 21:22 A wise man scaleth the city of the mighty, and casteth down the strength of the confidence thereof.

When the Apostle Paul is taken by the Greek philosophers to Mars Hill in Athens he does not launch his speech by immediately preaching about sin. He preaches about the Creator. *Act 17:19 And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is? Act 17:20 For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean. Act 17:21 (For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.) Act 17:22 Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. Act 17:23 For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. Act 17:24 God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Act 17:25 Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; Creation, that is origins, is the foundation of any system of belief. Origins are important and define the way we think and believe. Faith is linked to origins.*

Apologetics is the theological term we use for “defending” our faith. An apology is a defence. Why then is it that so many so called Christians are hopeless at defending their faith? Just look at what they fill their lives with and you have the answer. Garbage in garbage out. They are far more familiar with the world that is than the world to come. They relegate religion to a small compartment instead of making it the sum and substance of their life. They are addicted to the world.

It may be that such people make excuses that they are not intellectual or clever enough to do it. Perhaps that is why Jesus chose some poor young fisherman to be standard bearers of the gospel, to kill that lie. God can use anybody that is willing to be used. *Jer 1:7 But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.* A “child” with the wisdom of God is a force to be reckoned with! Can you pray that prayer that God would use you to bring down strongholds or are you by neglect fighting for the enemy? Jesus said, *Mat 12:30 He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.*

Churches are weak because they carry people that could walk themselves. Churches resemble hospitals not training camps. Wounded soldiers are worse than dead soldiers because they need four people to carry them and as a result the others cannot fight. We need a mentality of conflict that will make us engage in the spiritual battles of our age. *2Co 10:4 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down (lit. demolishing) of strong holds;) 2Co 10:5 Casting down imaginations (lit. thoughts), and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.*

So what efforts are we making to engage the enemy? Well the first one is to get our weapons together, the spiritual weapons. *Eph 6:13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.* Fear will be one of the key obstructions that we face. Fear of ridicule, fear of failure and fear of man. Where there is fear there is the lack of faith in Christ. *Php 4:13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.* Or perhaps you can do nothing because He doesn't strengthen you. Your strength is not from Him.

I want to share a testimony with you about a man called Richard Lumsden. Richard first had to pull down the imaginations of his own heart, something that we should all think seriously about before we pull down other people's "imaginations". It cost Richard his job but it opened up new opportunities. It shows how Jesus triumphed in his life.

A wise man scaleth the city of the mighty, and casteth down the strength of the confidence thereof could have been written for Dick Lumsden. It is what should be written of us too. Jesus said *Mat 16:18 I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.* He did not give us a picture of being trapped in a fortress by hell attacking us, rather he gave us the picture of us attacking hell itself and battering its gates down. They will not prevail. The wise man is on the attack, he scales the city. Let us have the courage to pray that God will give us both the wisdom and the opportunities to attack the gates of hell. Can you pray that prayer?

Richard Lumsden 1938-1997

Here is the story of a staunch Darwinian who converted to creationism first, then to Christianity.



You couldn't claim Dick Lumsden's faith came from the culture in which he lived, like you might with someone from the 1500s. If anything he was a product of the anti-creationist second half of the twentieth century. Dr. Richard D. Lumsden was fully grounded in Darwinian philosophy and had no reason or desire to consider Christianity. Science was his faith, the facts and only the facts. But at the apex of his professional career he had enough integrity to check out the facts and made a difficult choice to go where the facts led him, against what he had been taught and against what he himself taught. His life took a dramatic turnaround, from Darwinist to Creationist and from Atheist to Christian.

Dr. Richard Lumsden was professor of parasitology and cell biology at Tulane University. He served as dean of the graduate school and published hundreds of scientific papers. He trained 30 PhDs. Thoroughly versed in biological sciences, both in knowledge and lab technique, including electron microscopy, he won the highest world award for parasitology. All through his career he believed Darwinian evolution was an established principle of science and he took great glee in ridiculing Christian beliefs. One day he heard that Louisiana had passed a law requiring equal time for creation with evolution and he was flabbergasted. How stupid he thought and how evil! He used the opportunity to launch into a tirade against creationism in class and to give them his best eloquence in support of Darwinism. Little did he know he had a formidable opponent in class that day. No not a

silver-tongued orator to engage him in a battle of wits, which would have been too easy. This time it was a gentle, polite, young female student.

This student went up to him after class and cheerfully exclaimed, "Great lecture, Doc! Say, I wonder if I could make an appointment with you? I have some questions about what you said and just want to get my facts straight." Dr. Lumsden, flattered with this student's positive approach, agreed on a time they could meet in his office. On the appointed day the student thanked him for his time and started in. She did not argue with anything he had said about evolution in class but just began asking a series of questions: "How did life arise? . . . Isn't DNA too complex to form by chance? . . . Why are there gaps in the fossil record between major kinds? . . . What are the missing links between apes and man?" She didn't act in a judgmental or provocative way, she just wanted to know. Lumsden, unabashed gave the standard evolutionary answers to the questions. But something about this interchange began making him very uneasy. He was prepared for a fight but not for a gentle, honest set of questions. As he listened to himself spouting the typical evolutionary responses, he thought to himself, this does not make any sense. What I know about biology is contrary to what I'm saying. When the time came to go, the student picked up her books and smiled "Thanks, Doc!" and left. On the outside Dr. Lumsden appeared confident, but on the inside he was devastated. He knew that everything he had told this student was wrong.

Dr. Lumsden had the integrity to face his new doubts honestly. He undertook a personal research project to check out the arguments for evolution and over time found them wanting. Based on the scientific evidence alone, he decided he must reject Darwinism and he became a creationist. But as morning follows night, he had to face the next question, who is the Creator? Shortly thereafter, by coincidence or not his sister invited him to church. It was so out of character for this formerly crusty, self-confident evolutionist to go to church! Not much earlier he would have had nothing to do with religion. But now he was open to reconsider the identity of the Creator and whether the claims of the Bible were true. His atheistic philosophy had also left him helpless to deal with guilt and bad habits in his personal life. This time he was open and this time he heard the Good News that God had sent His Son to pay the penalty for our sins and to offer men forgiveness and eternal life.

A tremendous struggle was going on in Dr. Lumsden's heart as he listened to the sermon. When the service ended, the pastor gave an invitation to come to the front and decide once and for all publicly, to receive Christ. Dr. Lumsden describes the turmoil he was in: "With flesh protesting every inch of the way, I found myself walking forward down to the altar. And there found God! Truly at that moment, I came to know Him and received the Lord Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour." There's room at the cross even for know-it-all science professors, if they are willing to humble themselves and bow before the Creator to whom the scientific evidence points.

Dr. Lumsden rejoiced in his new-found faith but found out there was a price to pay also. He was ejected from the science faculty after his dynamic conversion to Christ and creationism. The Institute for Creation Research invited him to direct their biology department, which he did from 1990 to 1996. Dr. Henry Morris said of him "He had a very vibrant testimony of his conversion only a few years ago and of the role that one of his students played in confronting his evolutionism with persistent and penetrating questions. He became fully convinced of the bankruptcy of his beliefs and realized that the only reasonable alternative was that there must be a Creator."

Dick Lumsden was also appointed to the science faculty of The Master's College and used his intimate knowledge of electron microscopy to help the campus set up an operational instrument for training students. There was a joy present in his life and manner that made his lectures sparkle and he loved to demonstrate design in the cell that could not have arisen by Darwinian processes. In discussions with evolutionists, he knew "just where to get them" (he would say with a smile), having been in their shoes. His students appreciated the training his depth and breadth of knowledge and experience brought to the class and to the lab.

Richard Lumsden gave his personal testimony on Dr. D. James Kennedy's Coral Ridge Hour. In the feature he re-enacted that day in his office when the student made him rethink his beliefs. In January 1996 he also spoke to the Bible-Science Association in a response to atheist Richard Dawkins' book *The Blind Watchmaker*. In his talk called *Not So Blind a Watchmaker*, he gave several detailed descriptions of organs that could not have formed by Darwinian natural selection. In the question and answer session, he shared his testimony of how God had saved him from his former life as a bragging evolutionist. Unfortunately years of unhealthy habits as an unbeliever, including alcohol and tobacco abuse, took their toll on his body and he died too soon at age 59, in 1997. His students miss him very much.

In September 2001 PBS aired an eight-hour series portraying evolution as fact and as the central theme of biology. It tried to portray the only opponents to Darwinism as being motivated by religion. Dr. Richard Lumsden if he were still with us, might just call up the producers and ask, Say, I wonder if I could make an appointment with you, I have some questions about what you said, and just want to get my facts straight. It would be an interesting interchange. Doc would know just where to get them.

Read more lives at <https://crev.info/scientists/richard-lumsden/> and <https://crev.info/scientists/index/>

Pro 21:25 The desire of the slothful killeth him

Pro 21:25 The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labour. Pro 21:26 He coveteth greedily all the day long: but the righteous giveth and spareth not.

God has drawn a very thick line between genuine poverty and idleness. *2Th 3:10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.* There you have it. If Christians feed idle people they are breaking the command of God. Don't feel guilty about it. The text doesn't say the welfare worker kills the slothful, it says the slothful kill themselves.

It is known that if one wishes to spread a non-fact a gross untruth is too obvious. People see through it. Rather take a known truth and turn it through 180 degrees. By this reasoning idleness and dependency becomes a virtue in a humanist society. The work shy are victims and to be pitied.

The founder of The Big Issue made a savage attack on Britain's "dependency culture" with a call for the jobless to be forced to work in return for state benefits. John Bird who started the magazine to help the homeless help themselves, said only radical action would solve the problem of the growing 'underclass' (2003). The number of families raking in more than £20,000 a year in benefits trebled when Labour came to power, the culture of spiralling welfare dependency means 300,000 households now receive that figure or more in benefits - up from 100,000 in 1997. A worker would have to earn £27,000 a year to take home £20,000 (2009).

Pauline Potter of Sacramento, California has officially entered the 'Guinness Book of Records' as the world's heaviest woman at 700 pounds but now she wants to lose the weight. Potter blames her upbringing and genes as the main reasons for her size: "My mom was over 400 pounds and my dad over 600. I have eight siblings, all which are over 300, except one. She has repeatedly postponed losing weight but has decided it is now time to do something about her size as she has to rely on her son for help: "Everything is difficult from getting dressed to taking a bath. I can't put my own socks on. As far as my daily activity, everything I do is very difficult and thank goodness I have a very good relationship with my son and he is very helpful. He helps me do anything that's difficult." Yes, like walking to the shops to buy the large amounts of food consumed!



Potter's view of her plight is no different to other forms of dependency. It is genetic and she is a victim of bad genes. I am sure the welfare dependents will soon argue that they are genetically incapable of working.

But here is a lesson from nature. The damaged products of genes are removed from the system by "Chaperone" proteins. The protein p53 plays an essential role in the prevention of cancer by initiating the controlled death of a cell with damaged genes which is in danger to transform into a cancerous cell. The heat shock protein Hsp90, in turn, activates and stabilizes p53.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hvNJ3yWZQbE&t=226s> Creation works against bad genes just as God works against the slothful.

There is also in our verse the implication that that the slothful are "unrighteous" by making the contrast ..."but the righteous gives and spares not". The righteous have an abundance to give generously unlike the lazy self-consumer because God will bless him. *Deu 28:1 And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: Deu 28:2 And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God.* As Isaac Watts observed in 1719, "Blessings abound wherever He reigns."

Edgar Bergen the comedian said "Hard work never killed anybody but why take a chance?" The reason we should "take the chance" is because it is a divine attribute. *Joh 5:17 But Jesus answered*

them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. It is recognised in the law. 1Ti 5:18 For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward. Rest from labour is not something we are given in this life because we live in a cursed world. Gen 3:19 In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

Pro 21:27 The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination

Pro 21:27 The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination: how much more, when he bringeth it with a wicked mind?

We might continue with the thoughts from a previous ministry on the Creator Jesus (Note on Hebrews Ch 12v 24). Here we are looking at the morally bankrupt individual operating through their wicked mind. Do I hold the Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams in the class we are discussing? My answer is yes. I will go further and say he is cursed. *Gal 1:9 As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.*

This is the person who in a television interview hinted that decades ago he was not "too fussed" with the literal truth of the doctrine of the Virgin Birth. But as time went on he developed a "deeper sense" of what the Virgin Birth was all about. He said he was committed to belief in the Virgin Birth "as part of what I have inherited." But belief in the Virgin Birth should not be a "hurdle" over which new Christians had to jump before they were accepted.

John Stott, that so called Evangelical Anglican, poisoned minds with his evolutionary compromise (see appendix below). He believed in evolution and that at some point God stamped his image on a monkey. Adam was the chosen Ape. The consequences of this belief are that Christ has monkey ancestors, death entered long before Monkey Man Adam sinned and God lied to us when He said Jesus was the creator of man.

Now you must ask yourself why you would trust yourself to this type of leadership? Are these people suitable representatives of the faith? Are they breathing the thoughts of the risen Christ? Whatever their protestations, these men have put out wicked thoughts. They are wicked men with wicked minds. There will be many on the day of judgement who will hear the words "I never knew you".

Mat 7:21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Mat 7:22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? Mat 7:23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

It hardly seems credible that people who could prophecy and do miracles and even have power over devils could be told, you are nothing to do with me. There they are every week, on time in the church, singing the choruses, shouting out Lord, Lord and yet they have missed the whole point. Pro

21:27 *The Lord despises the offerings of wicked people with evil motives. CEV.* How can they be evil when they are doing such “good” works? The reason is that they have not subjected themselves to the will of Christ. Their master is still the devil. They are unreconciled. *Col 1:21 And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled.*

Learn also from this that special powers are not proof of a relationship with Christ. I heard a story this week of a woman who accepted the position of elder in a local church. The scripture is quite clear on the qualifications. *1Ti 3:2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;* A child can see that it is a man’s role. Why then would a person go against God and accept a position that He the Lord has not authorised?

It is because of sin and wickedness in the heart of man. We should be careful that we are not being led astray. *2Pe 3:17 Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.* God puts us into situations to prove our faith from which we can emerge stronger or destroyed. Saul thought he could offer God what God did not want from him. What God wanted from Saul He did not get. Saul ended his days in despair and isolation from God. *1Sa 15:2 ...rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.* All Saul was left to get guidance from was the witch of Endor. What goes around comes around.

Appendix on Stott’s belief in evolution (in his own words).

“Not many Christians today find it necessary to defend the concept of a literal six-day creation, for the text does not demand it, and scientific discovery appears to contradict it. The Biblical text presents itself not as a scientific treatise but as a highly stylized literary statement (deliberately framed in three pairs, the fourth “day” corresponding to the first, the fifth to the second, and the sixth to the third)...

“It is most unfortunate that some who debate this issue (evolution) begin by assuming that the words “creation” and “evolution” are mutually exclusive. If everything has come into existence through evolution, they say, then Biblical creation has been disproved, whereas if God has created all things, then evolution must be false. It is, rather, this naïve alternative which is false. It presupposes a very narrow definition of the two terms, both of which in fact have a wide range of meanings, and both of which are being freshly discussed today...

“But my acceptance of Adam and Eve as historical is not incompatible with my belief that several forms of pre-Adamic ‘hominid’ may have existed for thousands of years previously. These hominids began to advance culturally. They made their cave drawings and buried their dead. It is conceivable that God created Adam out of one of them. You may call them homo erectus. I think you may even call some of them homo sapiens, for these are arbitrary scientific names. But Adam was the first homo divinus, if I may coin a phrase, the first man to whom may be given the Biblical designation ‘made in the image of God’.

Precisely what the divine likeness was, which was stamped upon him, we do not know, for Scripture nowhere tells us. But Scripture seems to suggest that it includes rational, moral, social, and spiritual

faculties which make man unlike all other creatures and like God the creator, and on account of which he was given 'dominion' over the lower creation." (John Stott, *Understanding the Bible: Expanded Edition*; 54-56)

His (Stott's) most iconic manifesto was probably the 1986 book *The Cross of Christ*, which analyzed what the death of Jesus meant not just in a theological context but also in our everyday lives. Late in 1986, I (Paul Taylor) travelled across the Pennines to the historic city of York from my then-home in Manchester, England, to hear Stott give a presentation based on his book.

During his presentation, Stott firmly laid down his belief that any evangelical simply had to believe that Adam was a real historical figure, because the New Testament makes such a vivid comparison between Jesus and Adam, in Romans 5 and in 1 Corinthians 15. The presentation concluded with a question-and-answer session so I had the privilege of asking him a question publicly.

I had heard that he believed the theory of evolution, so I asked him how he reconciled this belief with his strongly stated conviction that Adam was a real historical figure. He answered with his now-famous homo divinus analogy, claiming that the "dust of the earth," from which Adam was made, was the evolutionary process guided by God, whereby man evolved from ape-like ancestors. It was his contention that Adam was basically the first evolved ape or rather first evolved from the ape-like common ancestor. Into this ape-like Adam, God breathed his soul.

Pro 21:30 No matter how much you know or what plans you make

Pro 21:30 No matter how much you know or what plans you make, you can't defeat the LORD. Pro 21:31 Even if your army has horses ready for battle, the LORD will always win.

There in a few words we have the total denial of man's ability to outwit or overcome the purposes of God. The Lord always wins and you cannot overpower His purpose. *Rom 9:19 Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?* If you cannot resist God's will, then your own will is subservient to God's and it is not free. Everything that happens is ultimately because God willed it to happen for His own good purposes. He did not will it to happen merely because it was the best of all the alternatives He could foresee. That would be God confirming man's choices and He would be a victim of chance. No! He rather willed it absolutely and unconditionally.

I like the story of the prophet Jonah. He was a very patriotic Jew probably the Ian Paisley of his day. He wanted the unrighteous to get their "smitance", just as I suppose we feel that the wicked world in which we live deserves what it is going to get, without mercy. We find this out at the end of the story where God says to Jonah: *Jon 4:10 Then said the LORD, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: Jon 4:11 And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?*

Jonah set about avoiding God's charge to: *Jon 1:2 Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.* It seems that Jonah must have had an inkling that God would forgive the people and so Jonah tries to avoid his duty and goes off in the opposite direction. God then moves wind and water to get Jonah to Nineveh to preach repentance, so to Nineveh he goes. God overrides Jonah's plans.

It was the same for Joseph and his wicked brothers. They wanted him out of the way, God had other plans. *Gen 50:20 But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.* It was the same at the crucifixion of Jesus. *Act 4:27 For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, Act 4:28 For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.*

The idea that a mortal can overturn the purpose of God is cosmic arrogance. It shows no understanding of the power of God and the limited nature of humanity. God is the absolute chess grand master. He puts things into place generations in advance. *Gen 15:13 And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; Now can you see the number of complex events that roll down the years to arrive exactly on time to fulfilment? Exo 12:41 And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt.*

The case of Pharaoh King of Egypt illustrates our verses perfectly and how the Lord wins from the start. It reminds me of a joke I heard recently, the barman says "no Neutrinos allowed in here", then in walks a Neutrino. The idea relates to getting ahead of the future through faster than light travel. God gets ahead of Pharaoh. God plans to harden Pharaoh's heart but Pharaoh gets on and does it. *Exo 7:3 And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt. Exo 8:15 But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said.* God is Scripture and what He says is inevitable. *Rom 9:17 For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Rom 9:18 Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.*

Pro 22:3 A prudent man foreseeth the evil

Pro 22:3 A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished. Pro 22:3 When you see trouble coming, don't be stupid and walk right into it - be smart and hide

You are probably aware of the accident last week (November 2011) on a street from Guangzhou province, Foshan city. A 2 year old is hit by the front side of a car, then the driver apparently shows intention of stopping but he changes mind and goes on by running the back wheels over the child. Subsequently dozens people walk around the area as if nothing happened, then a second car appeared to run over the toddler. Later a woman tried to remove the injured child and finally the mother comes and picks up her child who was rushed to the hospital.

The Chinese have grown wary of acting as good Samaritans in recent years thanks to a similar incident that took place a few years ago. A Chinese bus driver who stopped to help the victim of another hit-and-run was publicly upbraided and ultimately accused of causing the accident himself. In the news this week an assault on an 11 year old girl by a gang of 11 year old boys was witnessed by a sixth former who walked past, ignoring the victim's cries for help. Eventually another classmate saw what was happening and chased the boys away.

What would you do? Would you walk past either of these scenes? Should you walk past these scenes? Does our verse tell you to walk past these scenes? There is a difference between a "have a go" hero who puts themselves in danger, a Good Samaritan who helps someone but are not themselves in danger and someone who takes steps to avoid evil.

Lot lived in a bad place through a bad choice. It upset him. *2Pe 2:6 And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; 2Pe 2:7 And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: 2Pe 2:8 (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;)* Now Lot is like many of us. We get upset by the world around us but we get stuck in it, so that our vexation goes on. It took angels to drag Lot out of Sodom and if they hadn't he would have gone up in smoke with them.

Someone observed that it wasn't so much a problem of getting the children of Israel out of Egypt but getting Egypt out of the children of Israel. If you live beside evil long enough you become more accustomed to it. No doubt we see the evil but we lack the will or desire to avoid it. You see, this verse today must be accompanied by a prayer. *Luk 11:4 ...And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.* I do not think that it is possible for us to avoid evil in our own strength and I do not see that God intended us to and so He reminds us to ask Him for help.

Our lives are dependent upon the power of God. When Paul is directed to Philippi in Macedonia he takes the gospel to Europe. *Act 16:12 And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days. Act 16:13 And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither. Act 16:14 And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. Act 16:15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.* This is the first time Christianity arrives in Europe. No wonder he reminds the Philippians and himself, *Php 4:13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*

It must have been a time of great dependence on God. Now that word "strengthen" means empower, the Greek work is derived from 'dunamis', where we get our words dynamic, dynamite and dynamo from. Christ is the dynamo in our lives, the Power generator. I remember cycling home from work in the dark winter nights and lighting my way by lights driven by a dynamo that was powered by rubbing against the tyre. As the wheel turned, the lights worked and the faster it turned,

the brighter they were. Sometimes when it rained, the dynamo slipped and the lights were really dim. I have a torch powered the same way.

Now if Christ is not fully engaged in my life my lights will be dim. I shall not be a light to anyone not even myself. If Christ is fully engaged, I shine brighter, I have more power and in turn will be more able to see evil when it comes and be delivered before it arrives. You sometimes hear of Christians who are described as having Christ radiating from their lives, the Radiant Christians. Perhaps they are wired up better and more switched on?

Pro 22:7 The rich ruleth over the poor

Pro 22:7 The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.

I was surprised to find that George Muller believed that going in to debt was a worldly strategy. One might ask how a man who lived a life seemingly teetering on the edge of bankruptcy every day could say this. Surely he must have been tempted to ask for a loan occasionally, not at all. You see, George was given a peculiar calling.

George distinguished between the extraordinary gift of faith and the more ordinary grace of faith. He constantly insisted that he did not have the gift of faith when people put him on a pedestal just because he would pray for his own needs and the needs of the orphans and the money would arrive in remarkable ways. "Think not, dear reader, that I have the gift of faith, that is, that gift of which we read in 1 Corinthians 12:9, and which is mentioned along with "the gifts of healing," "the working of miracles", "prophecy," and that on that account I am able to trust in the Lord. It is true that the faith, which I am enabled to exercise, is altogether God's own gift; it is true that He alone supports it, and that He alone can increase it; it is true that, moment by moment, I depend upon Him for it, and that, if I were only one moment left to myself, my faith would utterly fail; but it is not true that my faith is that gift of faith which is spoken of in 1 Corinthians 12:9." *1Co 12:9 To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;*

The reason he is so adamant about this is that his whole life, especially in the way he supported the orphans by faith and prayer without asking anyone but God for money, was consciously planned to encourage Christians that God could really be trusted to meet their needs. We will never understand George Mueller's passion for the orphan ministry if we don't see that the good of the orphans was second to this. The three chief reasons for establishing an Orphan-House are: 1. That God may be glorified, should He be pleased to furnish me with the means, in its being seen that it is not a vain thing to trust in Him; and that thus the faith of His children may be strengthened. 2. The spiritual welfare of fatherless and motherless children. 3. Their temporal welfare. And make no mistake about it: the order of those three goals is intentional. He makes that explicit over and over in his Narrative. The orphan houses exist to display that God can be trusted and to encourage believers to take him at his word.

His supreme passion was to display with open proofs that God could be trusted with the practical affairs of life. This was the higher aim of building the orphan houses and supporting them by asking God, not people, for money. His faith is not the gift of faith in 1 Corinthians 12:9 that only some people have but was the grace of faith that all Christians should have.

Do you see the importance of George Muller's ministry in the context of the verse today? You do not have to become servants to men through debt. You are a servant of God. *Rev 1:1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; If we are servants of God, we should exercise that same grace of faith. Mat 6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

Mueller's encouragement was that God could be trusted and that trust was built upon a strong relationship with God that was over all other relationships and needs. If I seek the kingdom I will reap the benefits of the kingdom. So many Christians run their spiritual lives on a "breakdown" maintenance schedule. They continue to run in their own strength until it breaks down and then they fall back on God. That life shows itself in many ways. It is seen in how men live their working lives without consulting God, how they call upon doctors before God, how they plan their futures without God and yet when it all goes wrong God is the last not the first resort. Billy Graham made the observation that when men are on their death bed they call for the minister rather than the bartender.

Debt is sinful for three reasons at least.

1. When people go into debt, they are mortgaging a future that they have no right to.
2. They are showing lives that God does not support.
3. It makes you a servant of man not God.

Pro 22:9 He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed

Pro 22:9 He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor.

"He that has a good eye" shall be blessed. Generosity is about seeing needs and not missing the obvious. Take this joke about missing the obvious:

"The Lone Ranger and Tonto are camping in the desert, set up their tent and are asleep. Some hours later, The Lone Ranger wakes his faithful friend. "Tonto, look up and tell me what you see." Tonto replies, "Me see millions of stars." "What does that tell you?" asks The Lone Ranger. Tonto ponders for a minute. "Astronomically speaking, it tells me that there are millions of galaxies and potentially billions of planets. Astrologically, it tells me that Saturn is in Leo. Time wise, it appears to be approximately a quarter past three. Theologically, its evident the Lord is all powerful and we are small and insignificant. Meteorologically, it seems we will have a beautiful day tomorrow. What it tell you, Kemo Sabi?" The Lone Ranger is silent for a moment, then speaks. "Tonto, you Dumb Hoss, someone has stolen our tent.""

We often say that such and such a person “never misses a trick”, by which we mean that they are very aware of what is going on around them. Others are completely unaware and it can be the result of a brain development disorder. People with Asperger’s syndrome are very often of high intelligence but have difficulty understanding how to interact socially, which can lead to social isolation and eccentric behaviour. They can have: difficulty making friends, difficulty reading or communicating through non-verbal cues such as facial expressions and body language and difficulty understanding social cues.

The solution for Christians, if they have problems seeing what is going on around them is eye treatment. *Mat 7:5 Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye. Rev 3:18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.*

The Laodicean church in Revelation was characterised by its “luke warmness”. It annoyed the Lord that they could not make any positive or negative decisions. It made Him puke. They could not even see their own condition even though they thought that they had it all. *Rev 3:17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:*

We all have “blind spots” and some of them are unknown to us and we live with them for life. So what can we do? We can ask the Lord to use His eyes. *Psa 32:8 I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.* You see, our eyes are useless when it comes to seeing what is going on around us. Like the fools of Noah’s day we keep on with our daily rounds without the slightest insight into God’s working in the world.

This is “the chosen fast”. Read *Isa 58:6 Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?* I would put it this way, if you want to be heard by God “Try and think of someone other than yourself”. The consequence of this is that God will guide you

Isa 58:10 And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday: Isa 58:11 And the LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.

The blessing of the person with a bountiful (good) eye is the consequence of their walk with God. Has God been allowed in to do this? *Rev 3:20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.*

Did you also notice in this verse that we do not give with our hands? We give with our eyes.

Pro 22:12 The eyes of the LORD preserve knowledge

Pro 22:12 The eyes of the LORD preserve knowledge, and he overthroweth the words of the transgressor.

Psa 25:15 I always look to you, because you rescue me from every trap. Who or what you pursue will ultimately determine what you do and who you become. We live in a day when we are trying to relegate our moral responsibilities to genetic malfunction. Sin is the evolutionary product of DNA coding. Michael Stone, professor of clinical psychiatry at Columbia University and author of "The Anatomy of Evil," says it is. Ever-more-detailed brain scans are revealing the biological origins of psychological issues in "evil" people, from those who are mildly antisocial to serial murderers.

Many laymen now believe that homosexuality is part of who a person really is - from the moment of conception. What the majority of respected scientists now believe is that homosexuality is attributable to a combination of psychological, social and biological factors.

The criminal brain has always held a fascination for James Fallon. For nearly 20 years the neuroscientist at the University of California-Irvine has studied the brains of psychopaths. One of his direct great-grandfathers Thomas Cornell, was hanged in 1667 for murdering his mother. That line of Cornells produced seven other alleged murderers, including Lizzy Borden. "Cousin Lizzy," as Fallon wryly calls her, was accused (and controversially acquitted) of killing her father and stepmother with an axe in Fall River, Mass. in 1882. A little spooked by his ancestry, Fallon set out to see whether anyone in his family possesses the brain of a serial killer. "And I took a look at my own PET scan and saw something disturbing that I did not talk about," he says. "If you look at the PET scan, I look just like one of those killers."

Jim Fallon says he had a terrific childhood, he was doted on by his parents and had loving relationships with his brothers and sisters and entire extended family. Significantly he says this journey through his brain has changed the way he thinks about nature and nurture. He once believed that genes and brain function could determine everything about us. But now he thinks his childhood may have made all the difference.

Last week we looked at the third eye. *Psa 32:8 I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.* God's eye does not merely guide us it preserves the truth for us. If we look at the world with the eye of God, it will show us truth and falsehood. *Joh 14:17 Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.* I do think that we are talking about infallibility here. We are not saying that Christians will always be right. They will on occasion resist the sweet influence of God. He will though guide us. *Joh 16:13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.*

The first pillar of truth is the scripture. Those who reject its truth are not being led by the Spirit of God. That can only mean one other option! Paul writes to Timothy about the power of God's word.

2Ti 3:16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: There is in the word of God a power to change and correct, as our text says The eyes of the LORD preserve knowledge, and he overthroweth the words of the transgressor.

If the believer wishes to be successful in his fight against evil, he must use God's means. *Eph 6:11 Put on the whole armour of God.* Do you see that? The armour of God, you can never fight evil with human weapons, knowledge is not safeguarded by human wisdom and truth is absolutely what God says is true. *Eph 6:11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.* Standing against the devil, pulling down strongholds, overthrowing evil words and human philosophy requires divine intervention.

Pro 22:14 The mouth of strange women is a deep pit

Pro 22:14 The mouth of strange women is a deep pit: he that is abhorred of the LORD shall fall therein.

The Literal translation of the Bible puts it; *Pro 22:14 The mouth of alien women is a deep pit; those despised by Jehovah shall fall there.* We describe this today as a "honey trap", that is a trick in which an attractive person entices another person into revealing information or doing something unwise. I think that the verse doesn't just apply to "strange women" seducing men but to anything that can compromise a person's faith. The "strange woman" can speak lies about many things. *Mar 13:22 For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect.* We are surrounded by a world of deceit attempting our seduction.

One of the "strange women" of our age is pornography and many Christians have one of the biggest problems with it and it is addictive. When pleasure centres in the human brain are stimulated chemicals called endorphins are released into the blood stream. Endorphins are associated with the mood changes that follow sexual release. Any chemical that causes mood changes can be addictive, with repeated exposure altering brain chemistry to the point that more of the chemical is "required" in order to feel "normal." It also as a result makes real life relationships less satisfying.

Unfortunately, the church has not been exempt from this curse as many Christians are caught in the deadly attraction to pornography. George Barna (Religious market research) says that 28% of "born Again" Christians feel it is acceptable to view pornographic pictures. Residents of 27 states that passed laws banning gay marriages boasted 11% more porn subscribers than states that don't explicitly restrict gay marriage. Church-goers bought less online porn on Sundays however, expenditures on other days of the week brought them in line with the rest of the country. Pornography has grown into a \$10 billion business, bigger than the NFL, the NBA and Major League Baseball combined. Some of the nation's best-known corporations are quietly sharing the profits.

Companies like General Motors, AOL Time Warner and Marriott (Up to the start of 2011) earn revenue by piping adult movies into Americans' homes and hotel rooms but you won't see anything about it in their company reports. Adult titles are available as in-room movies in around 40% of all hotel rooms in the United States. General Motors through its subsidiary DirecTV, delivers hard and

soft-core porn to homes via satellite. Communications giant Comcast supplies various kinds of porn to homes via pay-per-view. And AOL Time Warner owns a cable company that offers erotic programming from Playboy and other outlets, including hard-core. Sky airs 42 porn channels and about a dozen on Virgin pay-per-view. Porn is becoming acceptable, it is easily distributed, easily accessed and it can be obtained secretly without public embarrassment.

The liberality of our age is a snare. Because lots of people do something does not make it right or give us a mandate to update morality. Are we more afraid of men than God? “The fall of the man into the snare of the harlot seems to be the consequence of the abhorrence or wrath of Jehovah. That abhorrence is however, the result of previous evil. The man is left to himself and sin becomes the penalty of sin”. (Taken from Barnes commentary). God often punishes evil with evil. It is the same sentiment as is found in Romans. *Rom 1:24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves.* They fall into a pit of their own making.

Part of the problem is that we never think through the consequences of our actions before we act. We never think, “Where will I end up if I go down that road?” *Pro 1:10 My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. If they say, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause: Let us swallow them up alive as the grave; and whole, as those that go down into the pit:*

Pro 22:15 Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child

Pro 22:15 Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.

Our text is repeated many times in Proverbs. *Pro 13:24 He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.Pro 19:18 Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying..... Pro 23:13 Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Pro 23:14 Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.Pro 29:15 The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.Pro 29:17 Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul.*

It highlights the importance the Lord places on child development and the need for a course correction due to the innate stupidity of children. I recall once at school, being separated from my classmates as we lined up to go into school for allegedly talking. I had not been but I was singled out with others and caned across the top of my fingers. It had a number of consequences. It taught me to hate the teacher, that justice was arbitrary and that violence was acceptable. What an example! The punishing was more important than what it was supposed to achieve, which was I assume a deterrent from reoffending.

Discipline for its own sake is futile unless it has a goal in mind and achieves that goal. The Lex Talionis, the law of retribution gave the option of an “eye for and eye”. What did it achieve? It gave

birth to another blind man. It was all about satisfying anger rather than satisfying righteousness. Jesus puts a new thought to this law. *Mat 5:38 Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.* So much then for the “claims culture” that makes us all victims who need compensating. Violence should not breed violence.

Jesus is teaching that life is not about settling our own grudges and relieving our personal distresses, it is about showing God to the world. *Mat 5:45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven.* As such we also notice that Our Father is longsuffering. *Rom 2:4 Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?* If God leads me to repentance, then that should be my aim when instructing or disciplining. The Greek word for repentance literally means a “change of mind”. In America, prisons were called “penitentiaries” (the Pen’). A prison was designed to inspire penitence, or true regret, in the hearts of convicts. It was about change. It was about change of attitude.

The prayer book (Church of England), in the section on absolution begins, “ALMIGHTY God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who desireth not the death of a sinner but rather that he may turn from his wickedness and live.” The sentiment should be embraced in family discipline. Unfortunately many parents think that they are off the hook when they get a profession of faith from their kids. Its like they have been inoculated against ‘hellvirus’. No chance of going there then. Really?

I am not too sure about these “peer pressure” conversions. These are apparent conversions from pressure by the parents or the church. They are relatively easily obtained and I have seen a lot of them and they don’t last. The marks of repentance are a changed life and the development of a personal relationship with Christ. Take look at what offspring don’t want you to see on Facebook and show me where Jesus is in their peer group? Left to themselves, where is their own self-generated interest in religion? Where is their spiritual life? Its where they left Jesus last Sunday.

The parental duty of discipline exists because young people do not exercise self-discipline. Parents are there to act on their behalf. When you see self-discipline developing, you may consider that you have a measure of success. Yet that self-discipline goes far beyond being tidy, doing chores or helping in the home. It extends to the discipline in religion. *2Ti 3:15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.* This is obtained no doubt from the parental input. *2Ti 1:5 When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.*

If the goal of any Christian parent is to see their children make a success of this life and make less effort to secure the next life, then they have missed the whole purpose of discipline. If the parent does not take this seriously in their own life, how can they expect their children to?

Pro 22:24 Make no friendship with an angry man

Pro 22:24 Make no friendship with an angry man, and go not with a furious man; Pro 22:25 lest thou learn his paths, and get a snare to thy soul.

1Co 15:33 Don't fool yourselves. Bad friends will destroy you. CEV. 1Co 15:33 Don't let anyone deceive you. Associating with bad people will ruin decent people. GW. What other influences can you think of that do the same? TV programmes, magazines, computer games, etc. To understand why we are vulnerable we must see the true nature of man as Christ does and we must develop a view of humanity that matches the view of Christ. We must see life through God's eyes.

Unfortunately many Christians see the world and its children in the same light as themselves. They see them as sinners, albeit unforgiven, struggling for good in an evil world. They do not see them as alien to God and in the service of Satan. Here is Jesus' view of men. *Joh 2:24He understood people and didn't need anyone to tell him about human nature. He knew what people were really like. God's Word.* There it is. Jesus had no misunderstandings about human nature or the nature of sin. How long will it take Christians to adopt a view of life and humanity that matches that of their Saviour and Lord?

I do not accept the idea that we should think the best of people who are not Christians, we should to the contrary think the worst of these people. Why? *Eph 2:2 You followed the ways of this world and obeyed the devil. He rules the world, and his spirit has power over everyone who doesn't obey God.* You see if you are not under God you are under the devil and his mission is to destroy Christianity. *1Pe 5:8 Control yourselves and be careful! The devil is your enemy, and he goes around like a roaring lion looking for someone to attack and eat. ERV.*

Yes you say, but how is it that some people really do "good" things and look like nice people even though they are not Christians? I answer with the following verses. *2Co 11:14 And it is no wonder. Even Satan tries to make himself look like an angel of light. So why does it seem strange for Satan's servants to pretend to do what is right? Someday they will get exactly what they deserve. CEV.* It is just part of the general deceit, its part of Satan's act. The devil is so mad he even hanged himself. *Luk 22:3 Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve. Mat 27:5 And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.*

So, you can either take what the scripture says or take the risk with bad company in the hope that it will not affect you but if you do, you are going against God. "Our corrupt hearts have so much tinder in them, that it is dangerous to have anything to do with those that throw about the sparks of their passion." M Henry. Solomon learned the hard way. *1Ki 11:2 Of the nations concerning which the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love. 1Ki 11:3 And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart.*

Who would have thought that of those who saw Solomon at the start of his reign? The wisest man on earth became the greatest fool of history. He thought that he could do better than God's advice and break the mould. Instead he fell into the trap of the unbeliever. What happens is that when you start to embark on ungodly relationships, you are part way there already. You have already decided that the people you want as companions are harmless company and mean you no ill but before you know it you will be like them. The nation of Israel preferred the company of strangers to the company of the godly. *Jer 2:25 Withhold thy foot from being unshod, and thy throat from thirst: but thou saidst, There is no hope: no; for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go.*

Christians should seek out Christian company for their own good. I would rather have no friends at all if I could only have unbelievers as friends. Men are known by the company that they keep and what better witness of this are these words. *Act 4:13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.* You learn from the company you keep and bad company will make you rotten but good company will bless you.

Choose your companions well because it can be life threatening and life destroying. Don't learn the hard way.

Pro 22:26 Do not be found among those who make deals with a handshake

Pro 22:26 Do not be found among those who make deals with a handshake, among those who guarantee other people's loans. Pro 22:27 If you have no money to pay back a loan, why should your bed be repossessed?

In the twelve years before the Third Great Awakening in America (also known as: The Revival/Awakening of 1857-1858; The Prayer Revival; and The Businessmen's Revival), the religious life in America was on a decline. It was a time of prosperity and people were seeking riches rather than God. The churches were losing people and worldliness was creeping in. In 1857 there was a stock market crash. Some felt that the Bank Panic was Divine judgment against a nation that had made mammon their god. Samuel I. Prime, chief editor of the daily New York Observer felt "as long as men transact business on unsound principles they will be punished. The law of trade, as well as of God necessitate the penalty." Whether the "crash" was a factor in the revival is open to question but the revival at that time was not. Over 1 million souls were saved and by 1859 the revival arrived in the UK. I pray in the parallels with our times the same may happen again.

Edwin Orr relates the story of a visiting merchant to New York City who was selecting goods when noon came. "He requested the city wholesaler to work through the noon hour" so that he would be able to return to Albany by the evening riverboat. "He was resolutely told, 'No! I can't help that. I have something to attend that is of more importance than the selling of goods. I must attend the noon-day prayer meeting. It will close at one o'clock and I will then fill out your order.'" They both attended the meeting and the visitor was converted. At a prayer meeting in Kalamazoo, Michigan, a request was read: "'A praying wife requests the prayers of this meeting for her unconverted husband.'" A burly man stood up and blurted, 'I am that man. I have a praying wife and this request

must be for me. I want you to pray for me.' No sooner had he sat down than another man arose with sobs and tears to claim, 'I am sure that I am that man and I want you to pray for me.'" Within a few minutes three other "unconverted husbands" had stood and asked for prayer.

We stand in times of dishonest dealings and dealings, which put each one of us in debt to other people's ideologies. We are at odds with God and we are not living in a Christian State because that would not operate a debt principle.

Here is a quick overview of the situation.

Slide 2: The size of the UK National debt.

Slide 3: The debt time bomb £16,000 owed per person. Government debt £1 trillion and rising.

Slide 4: Governments raise money by Bond sales or just print money (forgery if you did it).

Slide 5 & 6: Countries are rated on the risk they present to lenders (will they pay back?).

Slide 7: Where your money goes. £6.5bn overseas aid is in the Defence budget!! £26bn "Domestic" charity and £44bn a year in interest payments on the Government debt.

Slide 8: The price of moral decline?

Slide 9 & 10: The rising tide of debt (63% GDP). We are living off of our children's future.

Slide 11: Who is "Babylon the Great"? Who controls the world market? The International Monetary Fund (IMF) describes itself as "an organization of 187 countries (as of July 2010), working to foster global monetary cooperation, secure financial stability, facilitate international trade, promote high employment and sustainable economic growth, and reduce poverty. The Bank is primarily a development institution; the IMF is a cooperative institution that seeks to maintain an orderly system of payments and receipts between nations.

Slide 12: Do something. At least make a protest. Write to your MP.

Christians should fight the debt culture as modern slavery, *Pro 22:7 A rich person rules poor people, and a borrower is a slave to a lender.* **GW.** Getting into debt is like taking a mortgage on the future. It is arrogantly turning to God and saying "I must have a future and I will draw upon it". No wonder the merchants wept (Revelation 18) at their losses but how we rejoice at our liberation. Just think how much money would be saved if we lived in a godly nation and what good could be done with that?

Slide 1

Pro 22:26 Do not be found among those who make deals with a handshake, among those who guarantee other people's loans.

Pro 22:27 If you have no money to pay back a loan, why should your bed be repossessed?

Our legacy to our children and their children's children.....

Slide 2

You would need 6.5 times this amount to pay the National debt

This is what 4,600 tons of Gold look like and it is worth £156 billion.

Our National debt is equal to 1/6th of all the gold that was ever mined.

Slide 3

Britain's National Debt
You owe £16,105

UK National Debt Clock - DebtBombshell

Embed code:

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<p>Gilt edged fund raising borrow today pay back.....?</p>

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Slide 7

http://www.ukpublicspending.co.uk/year_spending_2011UKbn_11bc1n_50302010006090708040ukgs302

2011 UK national budget

(-) Pensions	122.1	(-) General Government	13.4
(+) Sickness and disability	24.3	(+) Executive and legislative organs	8.9
(-) Old age	86.7	(-) General services	4.1
(+) Survivors	1.1	(+) R&D General public services	0
(-) Pensions n.e.c.	0	(-) General public services n.e.c.	0.4
(-) Health Care	121.2	(-) Transfers of a general character	0
(+) Medical services	118.5	(-) Other Spending	48.3
(+) Public health services	1.7	(+) Basic research	0
(-) Health n.e.c.	1	(+) Central economic, commercial and	4.6
(-) Education	33.2	(+) Agriculture, forestry, fishing and	5.1
(+) Pre-primary and primary education	0.8	(+) Fuel and energy	0.4
(-) Secondary education	18.6	(+) Mining, manufacturing and constru	0
(+) Post-secondary non-tertiary educa	0	(+) Communication	0.3
(-) Tertiary education	13.1	(+) Other industries	0.1
(+) Education not definable by level	0.5	(+) R&D Economic affairs	3.5
(-) Subsidiary services to education	0.9	(+) Economic affairs n.e.c.	1.1
(-) R&D Education	0	(+) Waste management	1.9
(-) Defence	45.6	(+) Waste water management	0
(+) Military defence	39.8	(+) Pollution abatement	0.4
(-) Civil defence	0	(+) Protection of biodiversity and la	0.5
(+) Foreign military aid	3.8	(+) R&D Environmental protection	0.4
(-) Foreign economic aid	0.5	(+) Environmental protection n.e.c.	1.9
(-) R&D Defence	2.8	(+) Housing development	3.4
(-) Defence n.e.c.	0	(+) Community development	0.6
(-) Welfare	66.7	(+) Water supply	0.9
(+) Family and children	21.8	(+) Street lighting	0
(-) Unemployment	6.6	(+) R&D Housing and community ameni	0
(+) Housing	1.6	(+) Housing and community ameni	0.1
(-) Social exclusion n.e.c.	26.6	(+) Recreational and sporting service	2.1
(+) R&D Social protection	0	(+) Cultural services	3
(-) Social protection n.e.c.	3.4	(+) Broadcasting and publishing servi	3.7
(-) Protection	16	(+) Religious and other community ser	0
(+) Police services	2.6	(+) R&D Recreation, culture and relig	0.1
(-) Fire-protection services	0.2	(+) Recreation, culture and religion	0.1
(+) Law courts	6.6	(+) Other Spending	13
(-) Prisons	4.7	(-) Interest	43.7
(+) R&D Public order and safety	1.8	(+) Public debt transactions	43.7
(-) Public order and safety n.e.c.	0.3	(-) Balance	0
(-) Transport	12.2	(-) Total Spending	612.3
(+) Transport	12.2		

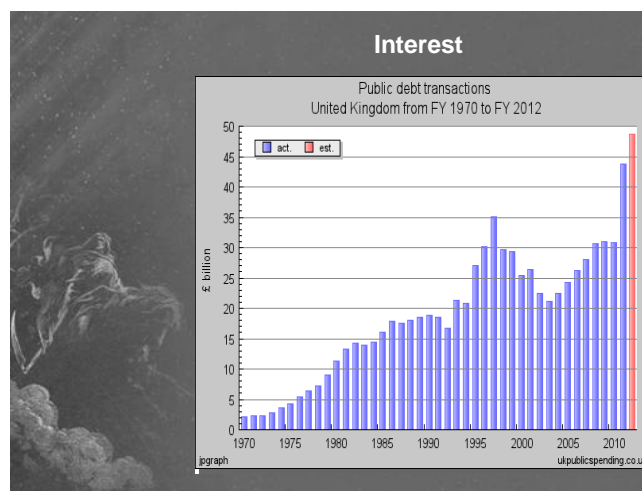
Slide 8

£25.6bn

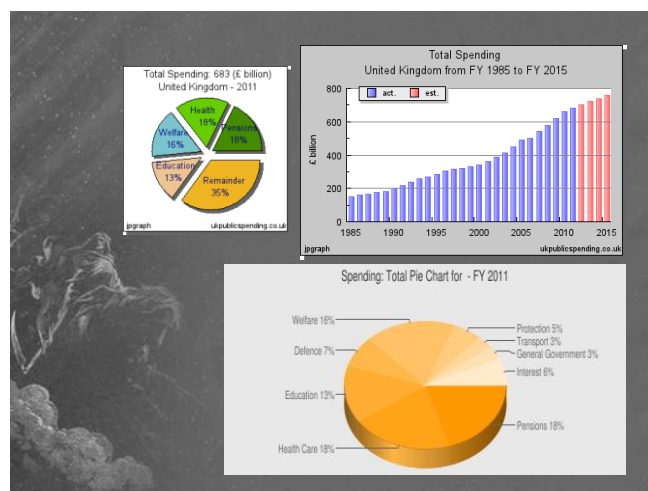
Social exclusion n.e.c. "not elsewhere classified"

- Provision of social protection in the form of cash benefits and benefits in kind to persons who are socially excluded or at risk of social exclusion (such as persons who are destitute, low-income earners, immigrants, indigenous people, refugees, alcohol and substance abusers, victims of criminal violence, etc.);
- administration and operation of such social protection schemes;
- cash benefits, such as income support and other cash payments to the destitute and vulnerable persons to help alleviate poverty or assist in difficult situations;
- benefits in kind, such as short-term and long-term shelter and board provided to destitute and vulnerable persons, rehabilitation of alcohol and substance abusers, services and goods to help vulnerable persons such as counselling, day shelter, help with carrying out daily tasks, food, clothing, fuel, etc.

Slide 9



Slide 10



Slide 11

Rev 17:18 The woman you saw is the important city which dominates the kings of the earth.

The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank at a Glance

International Monetary Fund	World Bank
oversees the international monetary system	seeks to promote the economic development of the world's poorer countries
promotes exchange stability and orderly exchange relations among its member countries	assists developing countries through long-term financing of development projects and programs
assists all members—both industrial and developing countries—that find themselves in temporary balance-of-payments difficulties by providing short- to medium-term credits	provides to the poorest developing countries whose per capita GNP is less than \$865 a year special financial assistance through the International Development Association (IDA)
supplements the currency reserves of its members through the allocation of SDRs (Special Drawing Rights); to date SDR 21.4 billion has been issued to member countries in proportion to their quotas	encourages private enterprises in developing countries through its affiliate, the International Finance Corporation (IFC)
draws its financial resources principally from the quota subscriptions of its member countries	acquires most of its financial resources by borrowing on the international bond market
has at its disposal fully paid-in quotas now totaling SDR 149 billion (about €390 billion)	has an authorized capital of \$184 billion, of which members pay in about 10 percent
has a staff of 2,900 drawn from 182 member countries	has a staff of 7,000 drawn from 180 member countries

Slide 12

<http://www.debtbombshell.com/averting-a-debt-crisis.htm>

Challenge your MP

WriteToThem.com is a free service that allows you to email your MP directly. Use the form below to find your MP and challenge them about our national debt. Your MP is your representative in Parliament and they depend on your vote, so make sure your voice is heard. It's not too late to prevent the debt problem turning into a crisis, but we need to take action now.

Contact your MP for free

Enter your Postcode below:

Go